



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 31, 2017

Day 42

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Third Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Government Whip  
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
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Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
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Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W),  
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Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Dang	Taylor
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### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Connolly	Orr
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Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Yao
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, you have a number of introductions today.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Timberlea school from Fort McMurray along with their teachers Andrea Organ and Alexa Thorne and their chaperones Jennifer Collins and Owen Collins. These amazing kids are not only ridiculously good looking, but they're ridiculously intelligent as well. I ask them all to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. member, I did meet these students, and you're correct. They are very, very intelligent.

Your second introduction.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you so much. We have another school from Fort McMurray, Christina Gordon school. It's another group of grade 6 students who really re-emphasize the fact that they are ridiculously good looking and smart. They are escorted by their teachers Mr. Gavin Rutledge and Ms Erin Gates. I ask you all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Welcome to you as well.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Well, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you from the constituency of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater the Landing Trail intermediate school. The students are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Hope Bradfield and Wanda Bury. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today and introduce to you and through you Rick Kirschner from Fort McMurray. He's a very active community member, and his charity, King's Kids, just recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. Rick is the brother of Dave, who I mentioned on Monday, and I'd like to invite him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on your behalf to introduce to all members of the Assembly someone who is now a familiar face to us, Ursella Khan. As we heard in the House on Monday, Ursella recently took a stand against racism at her high school in Red Deer. Her ability to remain respectful, cool-headed, and eloquent in the face of adversity is certainly inspirational to all Albertans. Today Ursella is here with her family – Aroosha Khan, Sadia Khan, Shanzay Khan, Harris Khan – and Tessa Murphy. They

are all seated in your gallery, and I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Heroes almost always have strong family behind them.

The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three introductions today. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two visitors in the members' gallery – I ask that they rise as I introduce them – Sofia Calderon and her mother, Joanna Calderon. They are constituents of Edmonton-Glenora, and Sofia has been selected to be on the Dragon Boat Canada U16 national team. She is the only athlete to qualify from Alberta. She has maintained an honours standing despite her very rigorous training schedule. Sofia, we are so pumped that you will be representing Canada on this team, and we will all be cheering you on. Colleagues, please join me in welcoming Sofia and her mother today.

My second of three introductions, Mr. Speaker. Consistent with past days, as part of Paramedic Services Week it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you three veteran front-line paramedics seated in the members' gallery. I ask that they rise as I say their names: Genevieve Marshall, a second-generation paramedic with 12 years of service; Jason Visscher, a paramedic with 25 years of service; Michael Plumbtree, a paramedic with 30 years of service. Again, thank you to you and your colleagues for all you do to keep us safe. Colleagues, please extend the traditional welcome of our Assembly.

My final introduction, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a constituent, again, of Edmonton-Glenora who's seated in the members' gallery. This is Trustee Patricia Grell, who is a member of the Edmonton Catholic school board, a trustee for ward 71. She's a tireless advocate for LGBTQ students. I ask that Ms Grell rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Josue Eurico Nsiamfumu, a constituent in the wonderfully diverse riding of Calgary-Cross. He's an artist, a musician, a community leader, the regional director for Alberta of black Canadians, and the international Francophonie director of black Canadians. I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Nsiamfumu through his work, especially with the Nigerian community in northeast Calgary. He is visiting us today from Calgary, and I wish to commend him for his work in community development and for helping to strengthen the diversity of Calgary-Cross. I would ask him to please rise and receive the traditional welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a number of employees from Telus, an Alberta union employer, who hosted Kits for Kidz outside the Legislature this morning as part of Telus Days of Giving. Kits for Kidz partners with elected officials across Canada to ensure that nearly 12,000 children in need are able to start the school year with pencils, pens, paper, notebooks, and other needed supplies. I and several colleagues here on both sides of this aisle today had a chance to participate in the event, and it's always a pleasure to work alongside partners in the business community to make life better for Albertans. With us today from

Telus are Claudia Roszell, Zainul Mawji, Shane Sabatino, Dan Campbell, Japman Bajaj, and Shadi Sakr.

Also here are some great members of the community who were out helping us stuff backpacks today: formerly of the Edmonton Oilers, Mr. Paul Coffey; formerly of the Calgary Flames, Mr. Theo Fleury; formerly of the Calgary Stampeders, Mr. Randy Chevrier; and formerly of the Edmonton Eskimos, Mr. Jed Roberts and Mr. Randy Spencer. I would like to ask all of these guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. member, I think I saw a red and a purple standing beside each other. I'm not sure that that's possible. Who would have thought?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you the Babytoni family. Rakshit, who is visiting us from India, is newly wed to Divneet Babytoni. They are accompanied by Divneet's daughter Notica and, as well, by Divneet's father, Jarnail Basota, who is a notable figure in the Sikh community. He is a great friend of mine and a host of Radio South Asia as well as of *Parwaaz* on TV here in the city of Edmonton. I ask them to rise, as they have, and accept the warm traditional welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Nadja Lalor. Nadja is a social work student from NorQuest College. She is completing her field placement practicum in my constituency office over the course of the summer, and we're delighted to have her around. I'd ask that she rise, as she already has, and that everyone give her the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

1:40

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some of my friends who are visiting from the Professional Young Insurance Brokers of Alberta, or PYIB. The PYIB is a standing committee of the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta, who represent almost 90 per cent of the insurance brokerages across the province. The standing committee's mission is to build a strong, professional young-broker network through continuing education, industry involvement, and political action. I invite the young brokers to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually didn't know that my colleague was going to introduce this individual, but if you'll indulge me, I'll just do it quickly to make him stand out, as he always has. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Theo Fleury, the former NHL star, Olympic gold medallist, and two-time bestselling author. He is a Calgary Flames legend and helped the league's best team to the franchise's first Stanley Cup victory in 1989. He was here today

helping with the Telus Days of Giving, and I ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome again.

## Members' Statements

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

## Energy Policies and Social Licence

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's face it. The NDP's social licence scheme is a complete failure. For two years this government has been imposing ideological tax hikes and caps on our oil sands, all in the name of social licence. The Premier conned Albertans, undermined the authority and integrity of our national energy regulators to excuse her long-held radical environmental agenda. She turned her back on Albertans when they needed her most, all because she wants to cozy up to the unrealistic Leap Manifesto fundamentalists in Ottawa, B.C., and Paris. She hustled Albertans.

Not only do we not have the social licence, but these radicals are more emboldened than ever before. Yesterday the new NDP-Green alliance in B.C. had a stark warning for this Premier. They are determined to, quote, immediately employ every tool available to the new government and stop the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. End quote. Members of the Alberta oil sands advisory group could barely contain their excitement. The Premier's top oil sands adviser, Tzeporah Berman, celebrated on Twitter, saying that this is "a turning point for BC." Alberta's pain has certainly been Ottawa's gain. They're collecting millions in GST on carbon taxes, they're turning northern B.C. into an antidevelopment Great Bear park with the tanker ban, and they're considering yanking the NEB out of Calgary.

So what was the point, Premier? Why did this NDP take money out of Albertans' pockets when they can least afford it? Why did you scare away job investment at a time of record job losses? This was never a scheme; this was a scam. Let's cut the nonsense and call the social licence sales job what it really is, snake oil. Stop working against us.

They talk down to Albertans by calling them rodents. The top new radical of the B.C. Greens, Andrew Weaver, had a message for this Premier. He said that she needs to get with the program. I have a different message: stop working for the radicals, and get with Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have a request for unanimous consent for an introduction.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Introduction of Guests

(continued)

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

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute honour to rise today in this House and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly one of my close friends, Mr. Harinder Pal Singh Sethi, who is from Amritsar, my hometown in India, and visiting Canada with his wife, Harleen Kaur Sethi, and son Dilrajpreet Singh Sethi. They are in the gallery with a family friend, Mr. Armander Batra, his wife, Ranjeeta Batra, and their daughter Sharmeen Batra from Spruce Grove. Mr. Sethi has a very successful, affluent business, and I'm honoured to call him a great

friend. I do cherish your friendship, sir. I do ask for them to rise, which they have already done, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

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

### Immigration Policies

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a restaurant manager I had the fortune to employ people from many countries like Australia, Great Britain, Germany, Chile, the Philippines, and Slovakia, to just name a few. These workers built rapport with my diverse clientele, contributed to the financial success of my business, and helped with the annual growth of my establishment. However, there were challenges these workers faced. As they started to get settled in and applied for PR or citizenship, they got caught up in bureaucratic red tape and understaffing at Immigration Canada.

For whatever reason, Mr. Speaker, the problems with the immigration department caused delays in some cases by many months. Then these employees' visas and work permits would expire, and they would be forced to go back to their country of origin. I have too many stories to share: from the Central American dishwasher who'd fled gang violence, who had to go back home; the American who had been married to a Canadian for years, who couldn't pay back her student loans because she couldn't legally work; to my having to hold a crying, pregnant server's hand because her husband of U.K. descent had to go back home to work to save money for their baby.

As an MLA my office handled many inquiries because the former Member of Parliament for Calgary Midnapore would not answer constituents who were caught up in the backlog. I will never forget telling a family of five from Mexico that they had to pull their kids out of school mid-year because they had to go back home.

The former MP for Calgary Midnapore, Jason Kenney, was in charge of Immigration Canada for five years. As an MLA I know that decisions made by government have real impacts on people and can ruin their lives. The decisions that Jason Kenney made as a minister of immigration caused untold hardship for people who contributed to the growth of my business. When he laid off front-line workers and added red tape to immigration, it caused direct negative impacts to my business, my workers, forcing me to spend tens of thousands of dollars in retraining and recruitment. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Sucha:** This is the new leader of the Conservatives in Alberta, the person they want to trust with our economy and our social welfare? Is this the kind of person we want running our province? I say no.

**The Speaker:** I want to remind all members that this House has a long-standing practice of no comments during Members' Statements.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Paramedics

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in Alberta a man will have a heart attack, and by tomorrow that man will be alive, recovering at home, surrounded by family. Today in Alberta an expectant

mother at home will go into labour, and by tomorrow she'll be holding a happy, healthy baby. Today in Alberta a child, sibling, parent, or a friend will be overdosing from fentanyl abuse, and by tomorrow that person will be returned from the brink of death, given a second chance.

Between these times of crisis and healthy, long lives that follow are a few critical moments, moments on which a course of a life turns. It's in those moments that the services of a paramedic can make all the difference. For most Albertans it is just a moment, but for paramedics and other emergency medical personnel those moments make up a lifetime. What might be the most traumatic moment in one of our patients' life could be one of many such moments that week for a first responder. Speaking from experience, you never really get used to those moments.

While there were many moments in my career when I managed to be just on time in the right place to save a life, there were also times when despite my best efforts, there was simply nothing more I could do. Those moments stay with you. There are members in this House and in this gallery who know exactly what I mean. When you see a paramedic or other emergency medical workers, remember that they carry these moments with them: the panic moments, the triumphant moments, the awe-inspiring moments, and especially the tragic moments.

My plea to this House and all Albertans is to acknowledge the heavy burden that these people carry on our behalf. As an advanced care paramedic I'd like to take this opportunity to express on behalf of myself and the entire PC caucus our profound gratitude for the work that they do. I encourage all Albertans: if you know a paramedic or if you run into one off duty, take a second and express your gratitude because we could all use a few more good moments like that.

Happy paramedics day.

### Educational Curriculum Review

**Ms Luff:** The province of Alberta has begun the process of updating the K to 12 curriculum so that it better prepares students for success in a rapidly changing world. The rewrite process is being led by teachers and provides opportunities for feedback at multiple stages.

When you read the documents, you see that many of the things that parents have been calling for are directly incorporated: mental math, financial literacy, and First Nations history and culture. These are also only scope and sequence documents. The individual learning outcomes have not yet been written.

When the opposition stands up and asks questions about how we are social engineering the curriculum, I wonder whether they know what scope and sequence means, if they've actually read the documents, or if they only read opinion pieces about the documents.

Jason Kenney believes that our current education system hardwires youth with collectivist ideas. The president of the PCAA compared it to Nazi indoctrination, and the Leader of the Opposition seems to just want education to be the same as it was when he was in school, when teachers wrote things in chalk and students sat in rows and memorized things that the teachers wrote. This is a factory model of education that teaches students what to think but not how to think. To look at the world that we live in today and think that this is an appropriate way to teach our children is beyond ridiculous. In a modern economy, where all of the world's knowledge is literally at your fingertips, we need critical thinkers, problem solvers, co-operators, and entrepreneurs. The basics are important, but basics alone won't prepare students for the world that we live in.

1:50

Every teacher I know works incredibly hard to teach all sides of issues, to teach how to tell if sources are credible, to present a logical argument. This draft curriculum aims to do these things, too. The math curriculum “supports students in developing resiliency through productive struggle, becoming critical thinkers and problem solvers.” The science curriculum ensures that students “have the capacity to critically evaluate information, make informed decisions and solve problems.” And in the social studies curriculum “students learn to address issues in society by respectfully considering multiple perspectives and engaging in dialogue with others.”

I would seriously question any politician who claims that this is a bad thing.

### Oral Question Period

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

#### Energy Policies and Social Licence

**Mr. Jean:** The NDP imposed a carbon tax on Albertans that they didn't ask for and can't afford all in the name of social licence. According to the NDP world view this carbon tax buys social licence to have our opponents get out of the way of new pipelines. Well, they couldn't be more wrong. Their NDP friends in B.C. are openly waging war on Kinder Morgan. So here's the Premier's chance. Will she stop punishing Albertans for her misguided ways and axe the carbon tax? Yes or no?

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Leader of the Opposition couldn't get a pipeline built to a gas station, and the reason we know this is because he was in a government that got Alberta nowhere. There's a reason for that, and we saw it on display yesterday. While the leader was outside telling the press that he was totally able to have a good working relationship with the B.C. government, his front bench was tweeting, calling them lunatics in an asylum. You know what? These guys couldn't get their act together, don't have their act together. Thank God that Albertans are not relying on them for a pipeline.

**Mr. Jean:** With this government in charge of legislation regulation, no one is going to get a pipeline built anywhere.

Social licence is an ever-moving goalpost. It ignores our world-class NEB process, hurts Albertans, and ruins investor confidence throughout the world. The B.C. NDP and Greens could not have been more clear yesterday that they are going to, and I quote, immediately employ every tool available to stop the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. End of quote. Social licence is a scam. Will the Premier wake up to the facts and quit her endless pursuit of snake oil social licence? Yes or no?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we have a strategy to build a pipeline. We brought together industry, environmentalists, First Nations, and workers. We brought them together. We delinked pipelines from the issue of climate change emissions. We then secured approval from the NEB. Then we secured approval from the federal government. It wasn't easy, but we got it done. What have the members opposite done? Sent lots of angry tweets, and that's it. You know what? We're getting the job done. They never will. Thank goodness, once again, that it's us who are in charge.

**Mr. Jean:** When Trudeau announced the tanker ban, this NDP government was silent. When Trudeau cancelled Northern Gateway,

this NDP government was silent. Now this government has the gall to claim that we are cheering for Alberta's failure when it was their minister who literally co-wrote a how-to book on pipeline obstruction with her friend from Greenpeace. If the Premier wants Trans Mountain built, she should shelve her social licence fantasy that she created and is now being used as a barrier to stop this pipeline. Will she do so and cancel the carbon tax while she's at it? Yes or no?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? When the Prime Minister announced Kinder Morgan, the opposition was silent, and it was a shameful day – a shameful day – because we all know they'd been cheering for Alberta's failure. However, we are moving forward much better than the opposition is. We put together a plan. We are moving forward with it. The federal government, who are exactly the ones who should be approving this pipeline, did exactly that. The pipeline will get built, and it's because of the work of the members on this side.

**The Speaker:** The second main question.

#### Electric Power System

**Mr. Jean:** B.C.'s anti-jobs coalition will cost Albertans billions of dollars, and the Premier only has herself to blame. Under the NDP-Green agreement the site C hydro dam may now sit on the chopping block. The Premier and the Energy minister were recklessly banking on this project to bail them out after they spent billions of Albertans' hard-earned dollars killing Alberta's coal-fired electricity and all the jobs that came with it. Can the Premier explain how many more billions of dollars the NDP's reckless electricity plan will now cost them?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that when we were elected government, we inherited an electricity system that was on the verge of breaking. Industry and investors told us that the only way they could invest in new electricity infrastructure was if we took the cap from \$1,000 per megawatt hour to \$10,000 per megawatt hour. That would be a 10-fold increase in the spikes of electricity. Alberta families could not possibly tolerate a 10-fold increase in unpredictability in their electricity prices. The system was broken, and we're on the way to fixing it.

**Mr. Jean:** What that NDP government inherited, Mr. Speaker, was the consistently lowest power prices in North America.

The Premier's entire economic vision for our province was built on nothing but a house of cards, and it's starting to collapse. She promised Albertans that we could kill coal and transfer to renewables pain free. Boy, was she ever wrong. The fact is that the Premier rolled the dice, hoping to import electricity from the site C hydro dam after she spent billions to wipe Alberta's coal generation off the map. If site C is now off the grid, what's the Premier's plan B?

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To be perfectly clear, site C was never part of our plan ever. We're still working on plan A because plan A is a good plan. What that plan involves is creating stability in our electricity sector and also creating affordability in our electricity sector. I know that the members opposite are upset that people can't bang on their grandmother's door anymore and sell them direct contracts where they're banking on and selling stability as a product because those guys over there think instability is something that everyone should see. We are making the kinds of changes that end that . . .



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

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier owns this, Mr. Speaker. She's worked for the B.C. NDP, and her chief of staff was most recently the chief of staff for B.C.'s NDP leader. Her backbench and staff spent years campaigning against pipelines and campaigned for the NDP out of province. She endorsed the federal NDP, who now want to implement the economy-destroying Leap Manifesto. It would destroy Alberta's economy. She's lost authority over her antidevelopment coalition, and they're feeling stronger and stronger every day. Will the Premier admit that her plan has failed and start to change Alberta's course?

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a little hard to follow. Nonetheless, we are very proud of our plan. We are moving forward to create a more stable electricity system to make life more affordable for Albertans and also moving forward with respect to climate leadership. You know, a famous hockey player – I believe it was Wayne Gretzky – once said that the key to winning is that you go to where the puck will be, not where it just was. These guys have governed for decades on the basis of where it once was. We are governing on the basis of where it will be, and Albertans are so glad to finally have a government that's looking forward.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

**Mr. Jean:** Unfortunately, when this NDP government does that, they leave the people of Alberta behind.

### Opium Use

**Mr. Jean:** Alberta is right now in the midst of a full-blown opium crisis. You wouldn't know it, though, from the NDP government's mishandling since the start of this file. We've had a dramatically increasing number of deaths, a toxic illicit drug market that is getting rapidly worse, and massive resources spent on preventable effects of this crisis in hospitals, jails, social services, and law enforcement. The NDP would rather fearmonger than change legislation to address the crisis. How does the Premier think her plan serves Albertans who desperately today need their help?

2:00

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, as the member opposite knows, we were very pleased today to be able to announce our emergency opium response regulation, that we'll be moving forward on co-ordinating people across the government to make sure that the work that's already been under way is more seamlessly co-ordinated and that the additional ideas that are required to move forward can be delivered to cabinet quickly, quickly, quickly, because we understand that this is an emergency. We need to do more because we understand how this hurts families and it hurts the people who suffer from these . . .

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

**Mr. Jean:** Over one death a day in Alberta, and it took two years to set up this commission, Mr. Speaker. Shameful.

We won't solve the crisis without evidence-based clinical services in the community. The Q1 report shows that in three years access to treatment increased for, at the most, 2,300 people. The NDP wants to take credit even though the vast majority of people right now are not receiving any support from Alberta Health

Services or the ministry. Experts suggest that there are tens of thousands struggling right now with opium use disorder in our province. How is the Premier going to bridge the gap between the trickle of available services currently through her government and reality?

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, this commission will be looking at those issues and making recommendations on exactly that issue on a very urgent basis. What I can say is that we have already significantly increased resources with respect to addictions treatment and addictions prevention. Quite frankly, for the member opposite to be complaining to us that we don't put enough resources in when they are at the same time demanding that we cut \$3 billion out of our operating budget in one year is just untenable. You've got to decide what your plan is and then stick to one plan for more than a day.

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

**Mr. Jean:** Two years to set up this commission, Mr. Speaker. Ridiculous and unacceptable.

An overprescription of drugs is creating a new group of addicts. The Q1 report shows that almost half of people who die from an OD were prescribed an opium in the year before their death. The College of Physicians & Surgeons says, "We prescribe opium painkillers . . . too freely, which fuels the supply of – and demand for – opioids and other drugs, both legal and illegal." The overprescription of opioids is hurting Albertans and killing them and getting them hooked. What's the Premier's plan to address this issue?

**Ms Notley:** Well, the member opposite actually identifies a very, very important issue. That's why the minister and the associate minister have been working on this issue with the college, because we know that their prescription strategies do need to be changed and that they do need to find ways to reduce the degree to which they prescribe those particular substances. That's not the only issue, of course – there are many – but it's absolutely an important one, that we are asking them and that they have agreed to work on very quickly to change the pattern that the member opposite describes, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Child Intervention Panel Recommendations

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is about to waste a golden opportunity to improve the lives of children in care. The opposition demanded an all-party committee so the minister could not hide until the next child death hits the headlines. Government instead chose a ministerial panel, which does allow the toughest issues to be buried out of public view. Now our fears have foundation. Many of the panel's recommendations go into what the government calls, and I quote: no legislative change required. To the Premier. You told Albertans in this House that the panel would make meaningful recommendations for real change and they would be listened to. Why did you not keep that promise?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member opposite read the legislation as well as the recommendations a little bit more carefully because there is almost no recommendation that the government hasn't committed to moving forward on. Where the legislation reflects the recommendations – indeed, the legislative

drafting process began by looking at the recommendations. I can take every recommendation and attach it to an action or a legislative change, so I'm not sure what the member opposite is actually talking about. [interjection] I'm very pleased with the work that has moved forward on this so quickly . . . [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** . . . after decades of being ignored, through an all-party process. Quite frankly . . .

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I will table today a government document showing many of the recommendations, and beside it says: no legislative change required. Premier, you're not telling us the facts.

The legislation labels many of the panel's recommendations as not needing legislation. I don't agree, but since your minister has decided not to commit to legislation for these changes – she now has had six weeks to take internal action on these key changes to be made. The answer won't fit in 35 seconds, so, please, Premier, can you tell this House and all of Alberta where we can find a written account of the specific nonlegislated changes made, or have you done nothing?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, it is super rich for the member opposite to suggest that a six-week turnaround, from a group of recommendations to this House to a form of legislation, is doing nothing after the decades of inaction by those people over there. Outrageous.

That means that what we did – just so that the member opposite is clear, when it says, "No legislation required," it means that we can follow the recommendation without changing the law. That's what it means. It doesn't mean that we're not going to do it. We have every intention of doing it. The member opposite should read the legislation and read the recommendations.

**Mr. McIver:** I helped write the recommendations, Mr. Speaker, and the Premier hasn't acted on a single thing she had a chance to say. She notes that she can publish the name of a child. Paula Simons had to wake this Premier and all of us up. She said that the child Serenity's name could be named by the *Journal* but not by the advocate. As a result, we're at risk of ignoring the plight of children in care until there's public outrage. We have to do better if justice is to be achieved. Is that the best we can do? Premier, will you commit to additional legislation to include more of the panel's recommendations in the next session of the Legislature? You haven't acted on the ones that are in legislation now.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I would suggest that the member opposite read the recommendations because nowhere in the recommendations do they suggest that we start publishing the name of every child whose fatality is investigated by the advocate. That's not in the recommendations, and for him to imply that it is is exceptionally disingenuous. That being said, we are moving forward on the recommendations. We've brought in legislation within six weeks. They have never acted that fast to get their parking space allocated, let alone to work on an important piece of legislation that matters to Albertans. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Just checking with members. It seems to be getting a little warmer in here.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Opioid Emergency Response Commission

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the government announced what they call their aggressive opioid plan, which can be summed up as more piecemeal action, including the creation of a new advisory opioid commission. Not only is this an admission that the government's response has not been sufficient, but after four years of increasing opiate deaths, instead of giving us a clear evidence-based plan – to the minister: now that you've got the advisers, how long before we see a public strategic plan with specific targets and timelines?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud of the group that's been brought together to form the opioid emergency response commission, which includes harm reduction program advocates, parent advocates, law enforcement, and representation from indigenous communities. The commission has scheduled two meetings for the upcoming month, and I look forward to their recommendations in the very near future. I'm going to allow the experts that we've assembled to bring together their recommendations rather than try and presuppose their outcomes.

**Dr. Swann:** All good people, Mr. Speaker. A little late to the table.

The minister has repeatedly told us that it was not necessary to declare a public health emergency because the government already had enough power and resources to deal with the crisis. We disagreed. Now she's claiming that the new plan will expand her powers but can't say what the new powers are or what will change. To the minister: specifically, what new powers does the minister have to stem the tide?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, instead of trying to use powers that were meant for an infectious disease outbreak, our government has crafted new, aggressive emergency tools that will move forward and address the actual crisis in front of us, which is a public health crisis. It's a question of how we react and respond to people who are living with a chronic health condition. This is an important issue, and as a government we think it's very important that every single Albertan who is struggling with substance use is treated with respect and dignity and has access to the treatment and the supports they need as quickly as possible.

2:10

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, the people on the front lines are looking for answers, not rhetoric.

Whether or not these additional powers are sufficient remains to be seen, but what is clear is that these powers are for the minister, and the commission itself reports to the minister instead of to a public health expert, a mental health and addictions expert. To the minister: how can Albertans have confidence that you will do what's necessary, especially since it's taken a year and a half just to get the advisory panel in place?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The commission will be directing aggressive action focused on six

key areas, including harm reduction, treatment, prevention, enforcement, collaboration as well as data collection and monitoring. The commission will be providing recommendations directly to my office around how we can best use the tools and the \$30 million in new budget dollars for 2017 to have the best impacts quickly within our communities, and then the commission is going to be responsible for implementing those actions. I fully trust the members of this commission to do an excellent job. We have a very talented group assembled.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans are concerned about the opioid overdose crisis and are pleased to hear that this government is taking action. As a health care professional I know first-hand of the importance of prevention and harm reduction strategies such as supervised consumption services and ready access to naloxone. While the opposition spends their time criticizing these measures, we're saving lives. To the Associate Minister of Health: please update this House on actions that were taken today to magnify the government of Alberta's response to the fentanyl crisis that is affecting my constituency and all of Alberta.

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I was joined at the Legislature by a strong and diverse group of Albertans who will sit on the Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission. This group brings together leading experts on substance use treatment, public health, and law enforcement alongside Albertans working at the front lines in our community agencies. This group will guide our next aggressive actions to fight this crisis, backed by \$30 million in new spending identified in Budget 2017. They'll be providing recommendations on how to expand access to treatment and eliminate treatment barriers, increase harm reduction supports, and increase data collection and analytics so we have the fullest sense possible of what is...

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

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the opioid crisis has hit all of our communities and we know that a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to succeed, how has the minister ensured that the commission will be able to reach all the Albertans that need help?

**Ms Payne:** It was really important for us, Mr. Speaker, that we were able to bring together a diversity of voices to the table and formalize that role for those individuals. We've included Dr. Tailfeathers, a family physician from the Kainai First Nation, who has been at the forefront in her community's response to the opioid crisis. We also have Atiya Ashna, a cultural outreach worker within the city of Calgary, who has a tremendous record of outreach, particularly among ethnic and religious groups, where the topic of substance use is a difficult one to broach. We also included Karen Turner, president of The Alberta Addicts Who Educate and Advocate Responsibly. Ms Turner has a powerful message...

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

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that there have been calls for the government to declare a public health emergency, to the same minister: why is the creation of this emergency

commission a more effective way to address the crisis and support Albertans affected by opioid overdose?

**Ms Payne:** Well, while a public health emergency is attractive on the surface, it is the wrong set of tools for this unprecedented crisis. Instead of trying to use powers that are meant for an infectious disease outbreak, we have crafted new, aggressive emergency tools designed specifically to help Albertans get the help that they need for access to treatment, harm reduction services, and public awareness. These are the tools that will help us address this unprecedented crisis. I certainly hope that all members of this House will support the work of this strong and diverse team of Albertans.

#### Minister of Finance

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The Minister of Finance got a bit defensive yesterday when we noted that he had no background in economics, finance, or budgeting. That's understandable because the truth hurts. While some people can learn on the job, the Minister of Finance has shown that he's incapable of this. He's shown that he's incapable of listening to economists, budgeting experts, or even sober-minded credit-rating agencies. Will the minister finally admit that he's over his head?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, Mr. Speaker... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ceci:**... my focus all the time is on Alberta. The focus needs to be on helping people recover in this province. It's been a tough couple of years, Mr. Speaker, but every step of the way this government has had people's backs. Of course, there's more work to be done. Forty thousand jobs have returned to this province. That's because of the work of this government, not those people over there. We have Albertans' backs. Why don't they get onboard and support Alberta, too?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that it's impossible to do your job if you don't take it seriously – like, when an electrician doesn't take his job seriously, someone could get shocked, and he will lose his licence, or if a lawyer doesn't do her job seriously, she will lose cases and then clients – and given that if the Minister of Finance doesn't take his job seriously, taxpayers will have their money wasted and children will be saddled with another generation's debt, does the minister believe that there should be consequences for not taking his job seriously?

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think the focus always has to be on Alberta, so I'll say again that economic growth is returning to this province because of the work of this government. This Minister of Finance, that Premier, this Health minister are all doing their jobs, and recovery is happening. The Conference Board of Canada has said that our GDP will grow 3.3 per cent. They've upgraded us half a per cent since the last time they reported. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that after two years most people are expected to be able to do their jobs competently, surely by now the Premier realizes that her Minister of Finance is just not up to the job. Given that the training wheels are off and the minister keeps crashing, with new credit downgrades at a rate of two every time he introduces a new budget – he's had his chance, and he's not

getting any better – does the Minister of Finance believe that he is fit to do his job?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to ask the opposition, maybe this Finance critic: where is your shadow budget? Anybody see one? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, B.C.'s antipipeline NDP voted to ratify a governing agreement with the Green Party. This agreement states that they will immediately employ every available tool to stop the expansion of Kinder Morgan. Your government has spent two years telling Albertans that we need the carbon tax to build pipelines. Well, we've got the job-killing carbon tax but still no pipelines in sight. To the minister of environment: can you provide the name of just one pipeline protest group or individual who opposed Kinder Morgan in 2015 that has been convinced of its merits because of your hollow mantra of social licence?

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

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Premier said it very eloquently yesterday, and I'll repeat: make no mistake; Kinder Morgan will be built. We've had naysayers from the beginning who said that you can't do environmental responsibility and extract resources. We proved them wrong. We got two pipeline approvals. We proved you wrong, and we're going to prove you wrong again.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, please show us the flow.

Given that when asked about the future of Kinder Morgan, the Deputy Premier stated that the federal government was in a position to grant approvals, that they have granted those approvals, and that we are committed to moving forward with the pipeline and given that the Northern Gateway was also approved by the federal government of the day and supported by more than half of the affected aboriginal bands, to the Minister of Energy: can you please explain how today's Kinder Morgan is any different from Northern Gateway, which another well-known NDP Premier – yours, by the way – personally opposed when she took office?

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

2:20

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the differences is, as our Prime Minister said, that our climate leadership plan was one of the deciding factors for the pipeline. Again, instead of joining your B.C. pals and cheering against Alberta, it's time that you stood up for Alberta like this side of the House.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, we always cheer for Alberta on this side.

Given that yesterday the Premier stated that she is open to going to B.C. in order to change people's minds about Kinder Morgan and given that after the NDP and Greens announced their intent to govern, the ever-fireable Tzeporah Berman called it "a turning point for BC, our coast, Reconciliation & our climate," to the Premier. Berman, Mahon, Weaver, Horgan: just how do you intend to convince an entire government to support two pipelines when these economic bouncers continue to cut up your social licence and just take it as fake ID?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** You know, Mr. Speaker, this is a critical project not just for Alberta. It's for Canada. Alberta has never

backed down from a fight, and we're not going to do that now. We're going to stand up for Alberta jobs. We're going to stand up for Alberta energy because that's the right thing to do. When are you guys going to join us? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Access to Information

**Mr. Cooper:** Following the election in 2015 Wildrose said that the improper destruction of records goes against the heart of an open and accountable government, and we stand by that today. The government, however, seems content to move further and further beneath the cloak of secrecy. To the Minister of Justice. Your staff regularly deleted and shredded records. What is your office covering up, and why does the NDP continue to hide information from Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Justice minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, we did have one incident in which an individual was misinformed about the policy and made an error in judgment. That incident was immediately investigated and was reported proactively to the FOIP commissioner. Turning that one incident into "regularly destroys" is just a little bit absurd.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Privacy Commissioner has given many, many examples, including the deleting of e-mails for the PPAs returned, and given that this Justice minister has a horrible track record of dealing with the access to information, what exactly are you hiding, and how many FOIP requests have been tampered with under your leadership?

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this incident was of concern to us. As soon as the department was made aware of the direction within the sheriffs branch, they immediately and proactively called in an investigator to investigate this. They proactively went to the FOIP commissioner to disclose that this had happened. We are working with the relevant authorities. We have brought into place a FOIP policy to ensure that this never happens again because it was determined that the lack of policy was a problem in this case. We take this very seriously, and that's why we've moved to address it.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question. If your department was so proactive, why did it take the opposition to release the report today?

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by pointing out that, in fact, the report was disclosed to the applicant by my department, so it was a report that was asked for by my department. It was a report that was prepared by my department. It was proactive disclosure on our part to the office of the Privacy Commissioner. We're not trying to hide anything here. [interjections] I think that the noise coming from the other side is just a little over the top.

**The Speaker:** Just to remind everyone, it's your time. If we can't hear, more time is going to get used, so keep the tone down, please.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Municipal Government Act Regulations

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the MGA review has been concluded for some time now, and apparently regulations are being developed. The former Minister of Municipal Affairs in November of '16 promised that all legislation and corresponding regulations would be enacted before the fall municipal election. Subsequently the new minister in January of '17 stated that before being proclaimed, all regulations would be posted for public feedback for 60 days. To the minister. That deadline has passed, and municipalities are wondering: has the feedback process been completed, and have the regulations now all been set?

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

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the member is right. We will have everything posted and done and ready to go for the fall, before the municipal election. That's our plan, and I did state that. I didn't set a hard deadline. I'm not sure which date he's talking about – we did say the spring and into the early summer – so if you'd like to inform me of that, that would be great. We are working on the final regulations to post them. There's a lot of work to be done. It is the second-biggest piece of legislation in Alberta's history, so we want to make sure we take the time to consult and get it right.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a little clarity would be appreciated by municipalities.

Given that the municipal elections are only 140 days away and given that the government has committed to proclaiming all legislation and corresponding regulations before then and given that to date only 10 regulations have been posted publicly, back to the minister: when will you actually be posting the next phase of regulations, then, and when will all of these be made public so that municipalities can plan accordingly?

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

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are a lot more than 10 regulations in this legislation – I know that – and there have been a lot more than 10 that have been posted over the past little while. There are more to come. When I get that exact information, everybody will see it because it will be posted publicly online for everybody to look at and everybody to provide feedback on.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that key components of the regulations yet to be released – and I'm sure you would agree, Minister – are certain charters for Edmonton and Calgary, the city charters, and given that this government has committed to posting the city charters for public comment in the spring and given that the spring is nearly over and the election in the fall is soon to occur, 140 days from now, to the minister: what is the holdup with this subject? Precisely when will you release the city charters to the cities and the public?

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Listen, Mr. Speaker, and to the opposite member, I appreciate his question. As I said before, when we're working with regulations such as the city charters, we're going to take the time to get it right. We've been meeting with the mayors from Edmonton and from Calgary. [interjections] If you listen, I'll tell you what's going on. We've been meeting with them constantly, with their administration. On a constant basis our administrations are speaking to and discussing the finer details of

what's going on, and once we get it ready and once the big-city mayors and we decide that we are ready to bring this forward to the public, we will do so.

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

### Charter Schools and Alternative Education Programs

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government has a track record of not coming clean with Albertans about its intentions. It sprung Bill 6 on farmers, it played coy about the secret ballot, and all Albertans know that it never mentioned the carbon tax while campaigning. It claims to be a champion of choice in education, yet the Premier has called charter schools "havens of elitism," leaving parents with a lack of confidence in the government's supposed support for alternative education. Minister, are you going to suddenly stop funding alternative education? Yes or no?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems as though we have this sort of question every few weeks or so. We can reassure everyone once again that from the beginning we have been funding enrolment for education in all forms, including charter schools, and in fact I've been working very closely with charter schools to improve and to build their extensions. I gave a 15-year extension to Westmount Elementary School. We have approved a loan for another charter school over a 25-year amortization period. So, you know, people can rest assured. The only time people are not assured is when the opposition likes to throw gasoline on the fire and pretend that there's a problem.

2:30

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

**Mr. Gill:** Given that government is no longer respecting local autonomy with the policies that allowed a child to attend the same charter school as their siblings and given that spreading children around multiple schools creates such inconvenience that parents may have to enroll all their children in the public system for the sake of simplicity and given that the minister talks about funding charter schools today but never commits to doing so in the future, Minister, are you not dealing with the sibling issue because you want to push all students into the public system? Is this your government's hidden agenda?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, again, Mr. Speaker, it's convenient for the opposition to try to cast aspersions on the solidity of charter schools. We know that we have been working very closely with them, and we will continue to do so in the future. We sent some very strong messaging to their charter school associations, and we always have a very good relationship, and we will continue to do so. It's not easy when you have to clean up the mess of 40 years of education instability. But you know what? I'm getting the job done.

**Mr. Gill:** They have been top five in the world, just for your information there, Minister.

Given that this government's school fee reduction system is designed for parents in the public system, which displays this government's lack of concern for the parents of children in the alternative education programs, and given that an example is an increasing transportation problem for alternative programs to the point of pricing them out of parents' ability to pay, Minister, is your plan to financially overburden parents so they're forced to enrol their children in the public system?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I mean, this was sort of a salad or a montage of so many different issues that don't necessarily go together. What I can tell you is that we are putting more money into schools, we're putting more money in to reduce the burden of school fees, we're building 200 schools around the province, and we are funding for enrolment. You know, all of those things are a sharp departure from the previous government, and Albertans do notice that this government actually invests in education and has a long-term plan to commit to investment for our children in our province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Refugee Resettlement

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Council for Refugees, an organization recognized for their immense contributions to the lives and success of newcomers, is commencing their national spring consultation here in Edmonton, starting tomorrow. Thank you to the sponsoring groups, immigrant settlement agencies, community members and businesses, and labour unions who have done so much to support these newcomers in our communities. To the Minister of Labour: how is the government helping refugees settle within our communities?

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Settlement agencies are the first point of contact for newcomers, including refugees. I'm very proud of the government's productive working relationship with our settlement agencies. Settlement staff help with orientation, assessments for language levels, education and skills training, housing needs, translation, finding doctors, schools for children, and many, many more services. The government has provided the Alberta refugee resettlement grant initiative, designating \$1 million to local agencies to help refugees integrate. We've also provided \$1.1 million to AUMA to help build welcoming and inclusive communities. These are just a few measures...

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

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Shaw reminded us of the disastrous policies of the former minister of immigration, Jason Kenney. To the Minister of Labour: has the number of refugees coming to Alberta increased when compared to previous years?

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Between November 2015 and December 2016 Alberta welcomed roughly 7,000 refugees. Of the 49,000 permanent resident admissions to Alberta for 2016, refugee admissions accounted for 15 per cent compared to 7 per cent in 2015. Though 2016 was an unprecedented year, planned admissions for refugees in 2017 are double those in 2015. There will be more privately sponsored refugees in particular as more Canadians are applying to sponsor refugees.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister of Labour. Given that we are anticipating a significant growth in the number of refugees settling in Alberta, how are we going to support this increase as a government?

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Moving forward, Alberta Labour is looking at new ways to deliver settlement services to better support all newcomers, including refugees. We are supporting refugees by funding projects that support their needs; for example, collaborating with one of our community partners to provide language and on-the-job training to help refugee women learn language and secure employment. The integration for refugee women project is a communications and job skills workplace training program that builds work readiness for 24 refugee women and leads to employment in banquet or concession services. We continue to enhance our...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Suffield Elk Herd

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently this government's own agency known as the Special Areas Board corporation sent a letter outlining their concerns with the growing Suffield elk herd. This herd has an estimated size of anywhere from 4,000 to 7,500 head. As it continues to grow and expand its range well outside the base, this has possible ramifications with biosecurity risks to the cattle industry. To the minister of environment: when was the last time an official count of this herd was completed within the Suffield base and the surrounding area to which the herd has expanded?

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

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For those who don't know what the Special Areas Board is – I know the hon. member across the way does, which is why we discuss it quite frequently – it was established in 1938 during a severe drought and economic hardship, and it's quite an interesting area. Actually, it's under my purview, and I've had great meetings with the boards on each side. [interjections] I'd like to inform them more if they'd actually listen at some point.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Strankman:** Mr. Speaker, given that the bovine TB outbreak in 2016 impacted producers and cattle which used community pastures in and around the Suffield Block and given that the department knew that the elk herd contained avian TB when they were transplanted from Elk Island in '97 and given that avian TB can present a false positive for bovine TB, resulting in unnecessary quarantine of cattle stock, Minister, will you commit to testing the Suffield elk herd for bovine TB, as requested by the Special Areas Board, this government's own agency?

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

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The elk stock in question on the Suffield base had been checked for bovine tuberculosis before they were in there. Subsequently, this last hunting season, close to a thousand head had been tested also for bovine tuberculosis and received no positive hit on those animals that were tested. So I'm not a hundred per cent sure what the member is talking about. That testing continues as those elk are in that area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** The second supplemental will help.

Given that the news reports out of Elk Island national park have stated that those elk and moose populations have grown to levels where a hunt or cull may be necessary and given that the Suffield elk herd has also grown to unmanageable levels and given that biosecurity risks can no longer be ignored, with chronic wasting disease now confirmed in the Suffield herd, will you release an updated wildlife management plan to concerned area landowners and the public should one exist?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It's also a fact that that herd has been reduced to about half of what it had been even several years ago, so there is a reduction in that herd. The member is absolutely correct. There was a positive test for chronic wasting disease in one bull elk in that area. It's a situation that as minister of agriculture I take seriously. We'll continue to monitor, working with the Minister of Environment and Parks, to ensure that our domestic herds around those elk stay safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Auditor General's Recommendations on Health Care**

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, last week the Auditor General released his report on health care in Alberta. Now, in it he describes a fragmented system, lacking integration of professionals, and a lack of sharing and use of clinical information. The Health minister will tell us that all of this was the fault of the previous government. Fine. You've been Health minister for over two years. What evidence can you provide that you are making the quantum leap to take the system to the next level?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for taking some responsibility for the system we inherited. We are certainly pleased to move forward with a number of recommendations to make Alberta's health care system better. One of the very first things we did to enable an environment where we could stop and do that was stop drastic and rash ideological cuts. That's one of the reasons why we are keen to have a system that has stability, so that we can actually work with our front-line providers, including the physicians, to be able to come up with a new amending agreement that will save up to half a billion dollars in just two years as well as bring forward a blended capitation model that will provide better health outcomes to Albertans.

2:40

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the initiatives that the minister has described fall clearly into the category of incremental change, reorganization, and moving in circles. There's no quantum leap in sight here.

Given that the Health minister also has 41 outstanding recommendations from the Auditor General and given that there has been painfully little progress on these recommendations during her tenure, to the minister: you haven't acted on the 41 outstanding recommendations from the Auditor General, so why should Albertans have any faith that you will act on the outstanding report that he filed last week?

**Ms Hoffman:** Again, I want to thank the Auditor General for his report and his recommendations in the past. Many of them have been in place since the 1990s. While, absolutely, we are keen to

move forward with improvements to the health care system, what we aren't going to do is move forward with what those folks in the opposition campaigned for in the last election, which was a billion dollars' worth of health care cuts. Instead, we're working with front-line providers, including physicians, to find ways to return half a billion dollars to the system so that we can invest that in improvements, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased that the Auditor General sees a great deal of opportunities for us to continue to move forward, protecting and enhancing public health care, because that's exactly what this government is going to do.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister just did it again. She constantly equates health spending reductions that are proposed by the opposition members to cuts in front-line services.

Given that the Auditor General has clearly stated that more money is not the solution and given that both this minister and her predecessors of the previous government failed in keeping expenditure increases under the combined inflation and population growth, to the minister. The Auditor General has clearly indicated that expenditures and performance are not correlated. When will you stop equating spending cuts or increases to deterioration or improvement of health care performance?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, that is so rich coming from the members of the opposition who regularly saw increases in excess of 6 per cent. What do we have to show for it? A blooming wait-list. We had deferred maintenance throughout the province, and what we're doing instead is that working as a province, we've gotten our increases down to about 3 and a half per cent as opposed to the 6 from the members opposite. And we're doing it with Albertans while protecting public health care instead of pushing for a billion dollars' worth of cuts, as they had in their last election platform. Now they're asking us to make even more. I think the last number was \$3 billion from operations. Give me a break. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue. [interjections]  
Hon. members, continue discussions outside.

#### **Members' Statements**

(continued)

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

#### **Red Deer Regional Airport Expansion**

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I dedicate my statement to recognizing a major transportation and infrastructure improvement to the central Alberta region. On May 12 I had the opportunity to attend the official grand opening of the expanded portion of the Red Deer regional airport. This expansion, in the form of a major runway extension, is a necessary economic boost to a region that is quickly growing. Providing the capacity to serve larger aircraft and longer haul flights will make Red Deer an attractive destination to more airlines.

Along with connecting Red Deer to new regions around the country and continent, the economic impact cannot be stressed enough. The direct impact of Red Deer regional airport is 225 jobs, equalling over \$13 million in wages and salaries, with a further \$13 million in wages and salaries when indirect impact is considered. With Red Deer regional airport's operations contributing an estimated \$52 million in total GDP and \$99 million in total economic output to the provincial economy, this is an essential addition to the province and the communities in central Alberta. Red Deer can be a new gateway for tourism and investment in the region.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that is investing in projects that contribute to diversifying the economy and create long-term economic growth. The federal government backed out financially, but with strong advocacy from myself and my counterpart from Red Deer-North the government of Alberta funded the \$6 million shortfall.

Also, thank you to all the major stakeholders who worked with us to get this done and are continuing to work on making RDRA even more competitive. A special thanks goes out to Red Deer regional airport CEO, Graham Ingham, and former CEO, R.J. Steenstra, for their co-operation and leadership on this project.

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

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Parliamentary Democracy

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have the privilege of living in a democracy. Democracy: demos, the people; kratia, to rule; rule by and for the people. In a country as large and diverse as Canada we have chosen to have a federal representative parliamentary democracy.

It is easy to focus on its flaws. It's not a perfect system. It is not immune from ego or personal and ideological political conflict. In many ways our system of democracy, like all human institutions, is no better or worse than the people that participate in it. Our democracy can ignore the people's will. The Legislature can be dominated by political hubris and political ego. Party politics can visibly reign supreme when question period degenerates into rude, hyperpartisan politics.

Yet our democracy works. We do not make decisions in Alberta at the point of a gun, and the people do have political choice. The checks and balances built into our democracy do ensure that all legislators maintain the rule of law. When it works, no other process of decision-making is better anywhere in the world. We must not let its flaws overshadow the amazing good that is done in this Legislature by its MLAs.

The MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake sponsored a private member's bill to address the problem with the distribution of nonconsensual pictures on the Internet. It was supported by all parties in the House and was passed unanimously during this legislative session. The MLA for Chestermere-Rocky View introduced private member's Bill 206 to enhance the communication that will help to connect prospective adoptive parents with expectant families and parents. This is another good example of legislation that appears to have broad support in this House.

It is easy to point out the flaws in our parliamentary democracy, but today let us focus on the good that we do and have done over this past session.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I will move the following motion under Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly provide an instruction to the Committee of the Whole that, during its consideration of Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, the committee be granted the power to divide the bill into two bills: the first consisting of the amendments to the Employment Standards Code; and the second consisting of the amendments to the Labour Relations Code.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is five copies of Paula Simons's column in the *Edmonton Journal* entitled Child Death Review Legislation a Betrayal of Public Trust.

The second one, Mr. Speaker, is the Alberta government's Child Protection and Accountability Act: Impact on Recommendations from the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, referenced today in question period, which says the opposite of the Premier's answer.

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

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table an article today in reference to some of the comments I made in my member's statement in relation to bureaucratic red tape and challenges in immigration. It's entitled Jason Kenney's 10 Biggest Blunders as Immigration Minister. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

2:50

### Motions under Standing Order 42

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe that we may be now at the time to deal with the matter raised by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I want to now recognize the member to give his arguments with respect to his application under Standing Order 42.

### Division of Bill 17

Mr. Cooper:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly provide an instruction to the Committee of the Whole that, during its consideration of Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, the committee be granted the power to divide the bill into two bills: the first consisting of the amendments to the Employment Standards Code; and the second consisting of the amendments to the Labour Relations Code.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Standing Order 42, the waiving of notice. For reasons of brevity I'll just speak to Standing Order 42(2).

If the Assembly grants unanimous consent to proceed with the motion, each Member who wishes to speak in the debate shall be limited to 20 minutes, and the debate shall conclude

(a) when all Members who wish to [have taken] part . . . and the question is put.

I might just add Standing Order 42(1).

A motion may, in case of urgent and pressing necessity previously explained by the mover, be made by unanimous consent . . . without notice . . . under Standing Order 39.

There are a couple of reasons why one would do this. Today we have a situation before us that is pressing, and that is that the government is currently on a path to move a piece of legislation through the House that hasn't had appropriate consultation.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard at length from the government about how this piece of legislation is about making significant changes to the Employment Standards Code, and a lot of that discussion has been around the need for compassionate care, the need to update our legislation with respect to employment standards. While there are many, many good things in there, all of those things are being used as political cover to pass other sections of this legislation. We as an Assembly have the ability to make some necessary changes



to provide the committee the opportunity to divide these pieces of legislation.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that it is not all that common that this sort of procedural activity would happen, but there is broad support, widespread support inside this Chamber for sections of the bill: in fact, part 1, sections 1 to 100. While there may be some smaller areas of disagreement between the government and the opposition, I'm certain that we could get widespread support to in fact have that piece of legislation passed today.

Now, one small amendment that I would probably still recommend would be to move the coming-into-force date. The coming-into-force date on this section of the bill actually doesn't take place until January 2018. You would think, Mr. Speaker, that if it was the most important piece of the legislation, you would want to do it, say, in September, at the same time the labour piece would come into force. We could have a small debate around that later should the Assembly grant the powers to the committee to divide the bill.

This is a very pressing issue, Mr. Speaker. The reason why it's pressing is because members of the opposition have heard at length from stakeholders that are concerned about this particular piece, the labour portion of the bill. We've heard from business, we've heard from chambers, and we've heard from individuals concerned about some of the ramifications around the second part of this bill. All that this motion here before us is asking for is the ability to proceed to the motion, the ability for us to have a full and robust debate this afternoon around the need for this bill to be separated into two separate pieces.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you would find that there are a number of times in the past when the Government House Leader has spoken about the risks of large pieces of ominous legislation. The motion before us would allow us to debate that so that we can come to the best-case scenario for Albertans, and that is clearly to divide this bill in two.

I encourage all members of the Assembly to support the motion so that we can do what's right not just for this piece of legislation but for all Albertans.

[Unanimous consent denied]

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 17

#### Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I had an opportunity to speak to this earlier today, and I would just like to continue a little bit with some of the questions and concerns that I have with respect to aspects of this legislation.

One of the things that I was talking about earlier, Madam Chair, was the impact that some of the changes in the legislation will have not only on workers but also on the ability of businesses to run their businesses if some of this legislation is passed. Again I'd like to point out that there are some giant assumptions that are being made in this legislation that, for me anyway, are neither family friendly nor fair. The title seems a bit whimsical in that aspect, especially

given the fact that we just brought forward a motion to actually split the bill into two so that the compassionate care piece could be taken care of right away and potentially even have the legislation brought forward and have the regulations done and get it going right away.

Right now as it stands, if this legislation does pass, folks that are in need of that compassionate care will not be able to participate, use, or otherwise invoke that legislation until 2018. I'm not really sure how we're helping out anybody who is requiring that compassionate care right now without actually having it go forward right away. For something that has been thrown back in our faces, that we're not agreeing with this legislation, the government sure does not seem to be in any hurry to make sure that that compassionate care piece is brought forward. I don't understand how you can call it family friendly when the most important piece of this legislation, at least as far as what the government has made clear, is actually the last piece that will be invoked for the public's benefit.

3:00

We're looking at some of the legislation, in fact, with regard to compassionate care. We're looking at being able to protect workers to leave for the care of a sick or dying loved one. What does that mean for folks that that's happening to right now other than some of the legislation that's already there? Obviously, the legislation needed to be changed. Somebody who is caring for a loved one right now, has a child go missing, is requiring a specific amount of bereavement that's actually outlined in the new legislation will have to wait till 2018, Madam Chair. Does that not matter to this government?

Does it not matter that sexual violence and domestic violence don't have a time limit on them? It's not going to only happen after 2018. These are the things that are happening right now. That's why this legislation was brought forward, to help out these families. Why would you not want to pass it immediately, right now, with everybody here, get it through the gate? No, no, no. We're going to actually wait till 2018 now. Is that my understanding? Anybody who is having troubles in their home or could be subject to domestic violence: well, the government thinks that that can wait till 2018 to come forward. Is that my understanding?

I want to understand why, when we've given the opportunity to work on one part of the legislation that all of us can unanimously agree on – split the legislation, get it through the gate, make sure that the compassionate care is there, set the precedent, set it right now for everybody – that didn't happen. There's nothing family friendly about that, and it's certainly not fair to somebody who is right now suffering at the hand of somebody who may be violating them or being subjected to abuse. I just don't understand. It is such a contradiction. It's just manipulative. Instead of looking at this piece of legislation in the two pieces in which it needed to be handled – and it's a very reasonable request.

All of the other legislation, had the government chosen to leave it for a little while, given us the summer and some months to do a bit more consultation, to strengthen legislation that obviously needed to be changed – then I look at some of the other changes, which I was mentioning this morning. Division 19 will now be removed from the legislation, should it be passed. Division 19 basically says that if the union decides to have an illegal strike with a trade union and in the private sector, there are absolutely no consequences for that group. There are no consequences for that union now. That union can have an illegal strike. They can also continue to take dues, and they can put a business out of business. They can intimidate the business owners.

Like I said earlier, this is about protections. Well, the workers certainly need to be there for the business to succeed, but if the business is no longer there because of intimidation and the impact

of this legislation on the workers towards the business – it's two parts of a puzzle that actually need to work together, and now you've chosen to elevate one cause over the other, inherently throwing a business, potentially, under the bus. Now, if there is a legitimate reason for striking, that's different, but we're talking about illegal strikes here, and that section, division 19, has been removed.

Now, in all fairness the government kept in division 25, which allows for penalties to be put against a union should they throw an illegal strike, which are about \$1,000 a day. But unions can fund raise. The AFL can come in and participate, and they can hold a business at mercy until that union gets what they want illegally. I don't know what else to call that other than: the government is okay with encouraging illegal activity. I don't think that's fair at all. In fact, it's so completely wrong that once Albertans understand what this government is doing, it's another notch in the belt of a government that does not care about this province, that does not make life better for Albertans.

We have that piece, and then when we go into the family-friendly pieces or not so family-friendly pieces, I want to speak a little bit about the resolutions that will be addressed through Bill 6. Bill 6, as you know, has been widely criticized across the province, and if you didn't see the rallies and the demonstrations and the active media sites and everything that are still criticizing the government for not consulting with farmers and Albertans – now, a large part of this bill will be left up to the supposed consultations around Bill 6. Well, we haven't seen those consultations, and we certainly haven't seen any regulations brought forward so that the public can look at the regulations and see how it's going to impact family farms and those aspects. I mean, this isn't even about safety per se or any of the other things that are obviously important to making sure that farmers and farm workers and families are protected.

If you look at things like the inconsistencies around compassionate leave time, well, that's another thing that I would think, after seeing what happened with Bill 6, you'd want to have some consultation on. Like, there are so many pieces of this that don't show any consistencies and seem to just be random numbers that are thrown out in order to rush this legislation through in the last days of the Legislature. If we're talking about compassionate leave time, we completely support that. We want all families to have the opportunity to meet their needs through leave, but we want it to be consistent – actually, people need that to be consistent – and within that consistency a good boss or owner of a business or anything like that is going to talk to the people that are in that state at that time to find out what is necessary for that person.

There are going to be unique differences between any person that is looking for compassionate leave time. It's not always going to be easy, but to be so prescriptive is also not necessarily going to be conducive to making sure that people are taken care of. Albertans shouldn't have to be concerned about determining the time allotment they need depending on their family crisis that they're facing. Those are individual situations, and I would assume, whether that's union or private sector, that most people are going to care about the well-being of the people that work for them because they want them to continue on. Maybe that's a grand assumption.

I can only do it based on being a job creator and having several businesses, and on the way that we take care of the folks that work for us because ultimately they take care of us. I don't have a business without workers. I don't have a business without having people who are interested in working for me and having relationships with them and knowing their families and going to their kids' birthday parties. That's the way that we roll. I'm nothing without my workers. There's just no point. I can't do it by myself.

These people are inherently important to my ability to be successful and to their own as well, so there's got to be an ebb and flow there.

I just wanted to go over some of the crossjurisdictional analysis on card check as well because this is one big issue for me where I believe the fairness is really being called into question. If we are moving card check certification in this bill and getting rid of the secret ballot vote to unionize in a workplace, then let's take a look at some of the crossjurisdictional perspectives here just to give you an idea. In Alberta right now if at least 40 per cent of the employees have signed union cards within 90 days, the Labour Relations Board can arrange for a vote to be held, usually within 15 days, but there's actually no time limit. The vote is to be done by secret ballot if a majority of employees want to join the union. That's going to change. All of a sudden we're going to be jumping to a threshold of 65 per cent, and then if 65 per cent is reached through whatever means possible, all of a sudden the vote is revoked.

In British Columbia a vote is required if at least 45 per cent of the employees have signed union cards, and a labour board can arrange a vote to be held within 10 days. In Saskatchewan a vote is required. In Saskatchewan if at least 45 per cent of the employees have signed union cards, the labour board can arrange a vote to be held.

In Manitoba a vote is required. Now, this is interesting because in 2016 the Conservative government in Manitoba brought back the secret ballot vote through Bill 7, the Labour Relations Amendment Act. Before this if more than 65 per cent – does this sound reminiscent of what's going on here? – signed the cards, the labour board could certify the union. If 45 to 65 per cent of the employees have signed cards, the labour board can arrange a vote to take place within seven days. A public opinion poll by NRG Research Group on behalf of the CFIB found that 71 per cent of Manitobans believe that all workers should have the right to a secret vote. Where are this government's numbers? Madam Chair, where are this government's numbers showing us that this is what the workers want? In Manitoba there was clearly a vote, and it was clear that Manitobans wanted the secret ballot.

3:10

I must say again and reiterate that a secret ballot in no way takes away from the strength or the organization of unionization at all. In fact, the metrics prove that secret ballots actually strengthen a union's ability to unionize because that person can vote freely, with their own will. This government is actually taking away that from these people. I guarantee you that the reason this is being rushed through is because this government knows that. They know that, and they are doing this based on the larger administrative pieces and not for the workers at all. If you cared about the workers at all, you would make sure that they had a secret vote. End stop. That is democracy. Can you imagine if your vote was taken away from you and you had to tell the person standing beside you or the person you worked for who you voted for? Can you imagine? Every single one of us in this House would stand up and make sure that that never happened. Or if your vote was taken away from you.

All of us are reaching out to the youth right now, asking them to vote in their municipal elections, in their provincial elections, in their federal elections, begging the youth to come out and show that they want to participate in democracy. But this government is willing to take it away from the very workers that want to make sure that they have that vote and have democracy. That's shameful, especially, on top of that, then to have the intimidation factor of being able to have an illegal strike and not have any consequences for that. How is this government going to justify that? It's not possible.

To continue on, the card count in New Brunswick: if more than 60 per cent of employees have signed cards, the labour board can

certify the union. When 40 to 60 per cent of the employees have signed cards, the labour board will hold a vote.

The other thing, too, is that in this province now if division 19 is removed, guess what? Not only is there not a consequence; they won't decertify the union. They don't have to do that because you have removed division 19 from the legislation. That is the biggest piece of accountability. Explain to Albertans how it is that you're going to justify that. It's not possible.

The Newfoundland and Labrador card count. In 2012 the PC government in Newfoundland got rid of the secret ballot vote if more than 65 per cent of employees signed cards. The Labour Relations Board would certify the union without holding a vote. With 40 to 65 per cent of employees signing cards, the board would hold a certification vote generally within five days. In June of 2014 the PC government brought back the mandatory secret ballot, which is to take place within five days.

Nova Scotia requires at least 40 per cent of signed union cards in order to trigger a vote. Ontario has 40 per cent to trigger a vote. Prince Edward Island has over 55 per cent to trigger a vote. Quebec has 50 per cent.

Then federally, which is really interesting, they got rid of the card check certification altogether. For federally regulated workers a secret ballot will be required in all cases after evidence of support is demonstrated by at least 40 per cent of the membership. At the federal level, for federal employees, they actually have to have a vote. Maybe you should look at some of these other jurisdictions and amend this legislation quickly.

Based on the fact that I with all my heart do not believe in any capacity that this legislation is either fair or family friendly, I would like to propose an amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Member, this will be referred to as amendment A1.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended as follows. The title is amended by striking out "Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act" and substituting "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2017". In the following provisions "Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act" is struck out wherever it occurs and "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2017" is substituted.

Again, I don't think I could be more clear on how I feel about this. It is glaring, the lack of consultation. It is glaring, the lack of crossjurisdictional representation. It is glaring that the government did not take the time to talk to other jurisdictions to see how this would impact the very people they represent.

There is so much evidence, data-based evidence, on how imperative it is that you do these consultations to see what the people actually want. The simple fact is that you have removed the 40 per cent target and put it ahead to 65 per cent and, on top of that, give adequate ability for people to be intimidated and pushed. What I find particularly interesting is that the government keeps talking about the compassionate side of this legislation, yet some mother or family member or somebody in a union could be bullied by the person sitting beside them to sign a card to get to 65 per cent so that a union could happen. How do you justify that? How do you justify that? If you trigger this vote at 40 per cent, chances are that if it's a good decision, people will vote for the union. What are you afraid of?

So change the legislation. There's nothing family friendly about that. That is bullying in the most obvious, obvious capacity. There's absolutely no way for anybody to be able to say without a shadow of a doubt that they had their say democratically when at 65 per cent

all of the sudden the vote is gone. At 65 per cent you should be thankful for and welcoming a vote because, obviously, people are interested. Why not? You're at 65 per cent. So have the vote. What have you got to lose? Nobody has anything to lose by having a democratic vote. It strengthens the union. It strengthens the ability for people to justify the need to unionize under those circumstances. But then again you've also taken out division 19, which clearly, clearly takes away accountability from the unions, that if they strike illegally could be decertified. That decertification was always in the backs of those unions' heads, knowing that if they were going to strike illegally, they could be decertified. But now that's gone, and that's because of this government. That is not fair.

So, yeah. You've taken away their right to vote. My goodness. I mean, if this is any indication of governance at all – you've taken away their right to vote. You have taken away their ability to hold the union accountable. You're basically throwing business under the bus. Surprise, surprise. On top of that, the entire mechanism is a big, big bullying mechanism to be able to take advantage of the people that work for these unions. How are you going to justify that to these folks? I am interested in people coming forward and saying: yes, 65 per cent is great, and I don't need a vote after that. I just doubt that people are going to be willing to give up the vote.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

**Ms Gray:** I just wanted to address some of the remarks from my colleague on division 19, removing the ability to suspend dues. The member in her remarks was talking about how important crossjurisdictional scans are, how important it is to look to our neighbours as to what they're doing. Division 19 was unique to Alberta and, in fact, double penalized unions because, of course, we already have the ability for the fines, that we have left in, which are standard for other jurisdictions as well. But what typically happens more often is for there to be court proceedings. That's usually where these things start to get discussed.

So being able to remove the ability to suspend dues to unions – I'll clarify that union dues do not get paid during a strike because the members are out on the line, and they're striking. There are no union dues to suspend at that point. What would happen is that after the strike ended, when everyone comes back to work, then union dues would start to be suspended.

3:20

Again, it's something that only Alberta did, and it double penalized. Not necessary. There are other measures. This was not something that was considered controversial during our discussions with both employers and labour going forward. And being aware of what's happening in other jurisdictions is really important.

Speaking of that, the member, who was speaking about other jurisdictions and card check certification, may not be aware that the federal government is currently bringing back card check certification. It will become the new standard for federal government, and that's in progress. As well, Ontario is expanding card check. They currently use it in the construction industry, and Ontario is expanding it to other areas as well. So there are other jurisdictions that are moving towards that card check system.

The final remark that I'd like to make is that the member opposite talked about as an employer wanting to treat employees respectfully and to work with them, and her experience is absolutely the experience of most employers in our province. It's been my experience as an employee, in many cases, that we have wonderful employers in this province, but that's not the universal story. Every

time I talk about the protections that are a part of Bill 17, whether it's on a radio call-in show or at a round-table, the stories that I hear, Madam Chair. Just yesterday while I was in Calgary, I heard the story of a woman whose son experienced over a hundred seizures on a weekend. When that person needed to take time to make sure that their son got to the hospital, they lost their job because we don't have the job-protected leave. I absolutely respect that most employers most of the time provide these, but there are strong reasons why we need to have these, and there are strong reasons why other jurisdictions already have them.

These types of measures, the process that went into talking to all stakeholders have brought forward Bill 17, which is fair and family friendly. I believe strongly in the title that we have. We have found a balance between the two parties when it comes to the labour relations system, when it comes to employment standards, making sure we're balancing the relationship and the power dynamic between those two so that we can have a fair collective bargaining system in our province.

I very much wanted to address just briefly a couple of the member's comments because a crossjurisdictional comparison and deep discussions with all stakeholders were important to us. I will not be supporting the member's amendment to the title of the bill because this bill is fair; it is family friendly. It will make a significant difference for workers in our province, and I'm quite proud of the work that we've done to bring this forward today.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. I wanted to take a moment to thank the hon. minister for the changes to compassionate care. We completely agree with you a hundred per cent. In fact, that's why we want to split the bill so that that can get put through right away. The concern I have, Madam Chair, is that for all of those beautiful words that were just said – and I completely agree with you – it doesn't get enacted until 2018. Like, that's not helping anybody right now. We were wanting to put it through right now, pass it in one day, and get it through the gate so that compassionate care can be put forward as legislation right now. I completely agree with you.

My issue here is that if we're looking at card check, the federal level is going to be at 40 per cent, and it still triggers – it still triggers – a vote. We're not talking about that. We're talking about the vote itself. Sixty-five per cent enables unions to be able to manipulate and intimidate and work over the system so that they are not able to have their vote. The minute that they reach the 65 per cent threshold, that's it. It's done. Why remove the vote at all? That's where the change needs to be made. Do whatever threshold you want to trigger the vote, but have the vote. That secret ballot is the most important piece.

The other piece that I also wanted to address is the fines. Like I said, there is a balance. Division 25 is the fines. That's the thousand dollars a day that a union will be charged if they do an illegal strike. But there are ways that a union can fund raise. They can use the AFL. There are a gazillion ways that a union can raise that money and hold that company at bay. That is not good for the workers, and that's not good for the business.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Earlier today there was, I thought, a really good way to solve this problem – and it was

brought up by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – to be able to make this a family-friendly bill. What he wanted to do was to essentially split the bill into two components so that we can demonstrate to everybody what the family-friendly components are and what the labour relations parts of the bill are. You know, when the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills brought up notice of Standing Order 42, he proposed the following motion. He said:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly provide an instruction to the Committee of the Whole that, during its consideration of Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act . . .

So he's going back and making sure that he's looking at this.

. . . the committee be granted the power to divide the bill into two bills:

Two bills so that we don't have the problem that the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View was talking about, the part that talks about illegal strikes or strikes that, really, there's no notification. Like, if it's 65 per cent, you just become a union. What's that got to do with a fair and family-friendly workplace?

It also goes on to say:

the first consisting of the amendments to the Employment Standards Code;

That's what we were talking about there.

and the second consisting of the amendments to the Labour Relations Code.

Now, you can make that family friendly if we divide it in two. I thought that was a very fair motion that he had proposed earlier today.

This name is, frankly, just not what it says it is. I agree with this amendment. We need to have this name changed because it's just not what we're looking for in a bill. "Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act" should be amended, substituted with the "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act" to reflect what this is because that's what we're talking about for the most part. I would love to see – there are so many parts to this bill that I think need to be brought forward and that I would be able to support. If we were able to divide those two, I would be able to support them. But separately we need to be able to go back and talk. We need to be able to go to our constituents and have that time to be able to show them what's in this bill.

Whenever you make a bill, it's very complex, and each word can have a nuance all of its own. We have to respect all the employers that are in this province that will be impacted by this bill. Each word can mean something else, and we frankly don't want to see any unintended consequences happen as a result of having words that perhaps were not the best intentioned.

Much of this bill deals with unions. There again, I don't see where this becomes a family-friendly workplaces act when you're talking about unions and the unions' ability to salt. Yesterday I had talked about salting, and I will remind the House again that salting is when a union employee or sympathizer gets a job at a non-union workplace solely in order to organize workers or disrupt company operations. So if they're hired and on that same day that they're hired they want to be able to form a union, but they have not actually worked there to see if there are actually any problems in that workplace, they can just go ahead and try to create a union. That causes disruption, frankly, in the workplace. It does not make it family friendly but disruptive, Madam Chair. The title is misleading. It, frankly, needs to be changed.

3:30

You know, these are reasons why I would be definitely supporting this amendment, because it's a well-planned-out, well-thought-out amendment. We need to be accountable as a government, and we don't want to be misleading to the public. If you're giving names that just aren't true or not completely true – there are

parts that are absolutely correct when you're talking with regard to being able to support people in the workplace, but when you're talking about unions, I don't get how those two should be coming together.

For those reasons, Madam Chair, I will be supporting this amendment, but I can't support this bill the way it's been put together. If we can change the name, that's a step forward, but I really think that we should have done what the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills said and divided the bill into two parts. That would have saved us, frankly, a lot of time because we could have now moved on with that one part and been able to vote on it and then from now until October, November be able to talk to our constituents and talk to the workplaces and talk to all the people that are stakeholders that will be impacted by this bill.

In Ontario they've taken two years, Madam Chair – two years – to be able to go to this, to get to this point, and we're trying to do this in weeks. We're talking about fairness. Right in there it says "fair" as the first word of the title. Well, how is that fair to Albertans? I would like the government to be able to explain the fairness of that, when you take weeks to do something that Ontarians are given years to do. This does not demonstrate transparency to the public. It doesn't give them any chance to be able to really look at it and look at the nuances that will impact them.

Again, I will be supporting this amendment, and I hope the rest of the House here will do so as well. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A pleasure to rise here in Committee of the Whole to speak a little bit about Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. I guess I just wanted to start a little bit with regard to what we're talking about here in terms of splitting up the bill, and I'm drawing on my experience from my previous work with regard to speaking to this. I'm not aware of any union contracts anywhere where they take a certain section of the language and divide it up and then the rest of the language is all over here, essentially having two contracts in a workplace. I'm not aware of that occurring anywhere. All of the language is together. That's why they call it labour language, okay? It's to help direct how relations between employees and employers are supposed to work.

When we're talking about this, let me quickly touch on a couple of other things that we're looking at in terms of the labour language with regard to the minimum wage, repealing the ability for employers to pay employees with disabilities less than the minimum wage. Now, granted, there have been no permits issued on this in the last 10 years, but, you know, again, this is labour language. When we're looking at that as a package, that is part of the stuff that we have to deal with. Trying to separate these things out is not really practical because we're talking about the language as a whole.

All right. Some of the other things that are being discussed within the language are youth employment and how we need to start complying with our obligations to the International Labour Organization with regard to youth employment, rest periods, compressed work weeks, temporary layoffs or terminations, deductions in terms of employers that penalize employees for a dine-and-dash or a gas-and-dash. Okay. Again, it's all labour language. To try to divvy up the two, we're not dealing with it as a whole.

To get a little bit further with regard to the amendment that has been proposed about "Fair and Family-friendly," let's focus on the "fair." Part of the consultations that were done with businesses was a bit of a concern with regard to the implementation time with some

of the leaves and how that would impact their businesses. There was a bit of, I guess, an ask by these businesses that they be allowed to have a little bit of time in order to implement and adjust to these changes that will be coming through. When we're seeing some of these different timelines in terms of implementation, those were part of the reasons why we're seeing the fluctuations.

I think, very clearly, that when we're talking about the language as a whole, we are talking about fair language. We are talking about family-friendly workplaces. It's all put together. I think the bill is very appropriately titled. I appreciate the member across the way bringing the amendment forward. Unfortunately, I will not be able to support it at this time.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Speaking to amendment A1, essentially to strike out the current title, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, and replace it with "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2017." I think this is a completely reasonable amendment to make. When we look at our Labour Relations Code and our Employment Standards Code, they are two codes that are separate, and we know exactly what we're speaking to if the title reflects the two codes that we're speaking to.

You know, the minister, if she wanted to, could have easily said, "Fair and Union-friendly" because I would suggest that many of the changes within here are pandering to her union affiliates and the New Democratic Party affiliates and the wishes of those businesses to be able to grow their business and utilize government legislation, government regulations to help them grow their business. I would suggest that when we look at this bill being union friendly as opposed to family friendly, you know, we could look at the fact that the bill is friendly to unions but not necessarily friendly to the employers, and there is an unfair balance, I believe, in what is being proposed here.

Card check certification. Sure, the minister will talk about how the federal government and the Ontario government are expanding their card check systems, but part of the problem is that if the need is so critical for unionization certification, it would be obvious, and the workforce would have no problem meeting the current criteria. But what the union bosses are encouraging this government to do now is to pave the way for them to grow their business in a way that's not necessarily looking out for the best interests of the workers. I suggest that this is more looking out for the best interests of big-business unions and the union executives rather than looking out for everyday Alberta workers. If the government is doing what they're called to do – and that's to serve the people of Alberta, not just to serve their union bosses – then they would look for family-friendly language here as opposed to union-friendly.

3:40

The minister also talked about double penalizing. So here we are; we're union friendly. Again, we're talking about being union friendly. She did not consider it to be fair that they were being double penalized, but she also mentioned that she did not consider increasing the penalties either. I don't know how old the penalties are, but possibly that should be looked into. The penalties should be considered to increase. If the union is involved in illegal activities, the penalties are what the penalties are, but now we're looking at a very union-friendly act here, and we're saying: oh, well, they shouldn't be double penalized for their illegal activity. I

fail to see how this Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act title actually applies in this situation.

I think what we recognize also is that this bill is not fair to the workers that have their rights taken away. The secret ballot is very much a democratic right within our country, and to move in this direction, where all of a sudden we open ourselves up to union intimidation without possibly all the facts being put in front of each of the individuals that are being asked to sign a membership card or to join the union, then I would suggest that that is unfair practice. It's not fair to the employees if they're not able to actually have all of the information put before them and they're being fed very one-sided information.

You know, this legislation is more about pandering to the wills of big unions as opposed to pandering to the needs of Albertans – Alberta workers, Alberta employees – the people that the Labour minister is called to represent and to try and present legislation and an environment for that will encourage investment in our province, which will then create jobs. This piece of legislation addressing the Employment Standards Code is acceptable, but when we move into the Labour Relations Code and we're doing it just for the will of the big union bosses – I didn't have anybody coming to me when talking to my constituents and saying: "Yeah, our union rules are out of sync, and this is not fair to the unions. They're working in an environment that makes it impossible for them to be able to actually exist." I believe what's currently in place has been very acceptable and very fair, so we need to recognize the relative labour peace that we've had over the last three decades and recognize that a labour marketplace can work very effectively without having to pander to the union bosses.

I believe the amendment makes a lot of sense. It speaks to what the actual bill is addressing, and that's the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code. The title Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act is so subjective. Everybody has a different interpretation of what's fair, what's family friendly, and I believe that that title is completely irrelevant to the legislation that's been put before us.

With that, I would encourage everyone to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to briefly speak about some of the reasons why I believe it's important that we accept this amendment and make the necessary change. Since the government was elected in 2015, we've seen this continual decision by the NDP to politicize legislation, and at every turn we see the government using the opportunity to say one thing and do another.

Any time a piece of legislation with a fancy name comes across, it should provide folks the opportunity to just put a pause on and dig a little bit deeper into what's exactly happening. You know, traditionally speaking – and maybe that's often in this Chamber – at least previous to this government, we saw pieces of legislation being called what they actually were. A good example of that in this particular session would be Bill 15, the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017. It's fairly clear what that piece of legislation does. It is a statutes amendment act on the tax statutes. The Securities Amendment Act, 2017, is an act that amends the Securities Act.

This one is borderline, but I'll give it to them: An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government. Now, probably a more appropriate title would be the municipal government amendment act, but it's close. Then we see pieces of legislation like this one, the Fair

and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. There could be lots and lots and lots of things that that piece of legislation does.

Every time the government chooses to say one thing and do another, they use a fancy name. A perfect example would be Bill 1 from last session, the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. We all know how well that particular piece of legislation created a job. Another good example of this from last session: An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. Well, it certainly did that. There was much in that piece of legislation that was way beyond the scope of the title. The Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act: that was Bill 5 from last session. Again, a piece of legislation that didn't adequately reflect what was happening.

Now, here in this session: the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. We all know that that was around banning paid plasma, not really about encouraging blood donation. An Act to Enhance Post-secondary Academic Bargaining: don't know why they didn't say, "implement the Supreme Court ruling," because that's the same excuse they used. An Act to Support Orphan Well Rehabilitation: also a very friendly name to describe what's happening but not accurately reflecting what is actually in the legislation.

My colleague, very rightly, is efforting to call the legislation exactly what it is. We could have gone much further and in itself made it political by saying something like, you know, an act to remove card check, an act to strengthen unions, an act to give the AFL a leg up, whatever. We could have. But, no, my colleague is efforting to change the name to exactly what they're proposing in the bill. It says nothing in this amendment about splitting the bills, although it's well established that that's a good idea. It says nothing about splitting the bills; it only speaks about what it is. Employment standards and labour relations statutes amendment act: that is what Bill 17 does. It amends all sorts of different statutes in two separate areas, and that's what we're doing.

We should stop overpoliticizing the names of bills, start calling them what they are. That's exactly why members in this Chamber should vote to support this amendment.

3:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that, and I will try to be brief on this. This bill, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act: there have been some questions that have been asked about why the name was picked.

I was thinking about a convention that I went to last year, that I was invited to. That convention was a union convention. It was the first one I've actually gone to in my life. I actually gained some understanding about why it's called the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. The reason why is because when you go to a union convention, they call each other brothers and sisters, so I now understand what this meant. The actual reality is that family friendly means union family friendly. I'm trying to help my colleagues to understand, to be able to read into the nuance of this question. The question that I'm asking is: how does the fair part fit it? I'm still really questioning and scratching my head on that one.

You know, the other part that I really wanted to say is that every time I hear someone say "fair" in any title, it reminds me of a used-car salesman when they say: "I promise you that this car is shipshape. It'll be fantastic. You won't have any problems with it." Immediately my spidey sense was tingling on this one, and I started to think: well, we really need to read into the details of this act.

Anyway, I just wanted to be able to bring some clarity to my colleagues to help them understand that, yes, this makes sense, that we should be striking it out and calling it what it is, but my colleagues need to understand that this isn't regular families that we're talking about. It's actually union families that we're talking about. That might help my colleagues understand this a little bit better.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View to amend the title of Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, and replace it with the "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2017."

Names are important. After my third child was born, I thought that my wife and I were on the same page with regard to the name that this child would have. I got it explained to me quite clearly afterwards that somehow we hadn't agreed on the name. I thought that we had agreed on the name Sarah, and I thought that we had agreed that her middle name would be Elizabeth. Well, I got the Sarah part wrong. When she was about two years old or so, because she couldn't say Elizabeth, she would go running around saying: I'm Sarah a little bit Smith. I wondered if that had something to do with the postman. That's a family joke. I can say that. I don't know if we got Sarah's first name right or not because "Sarah" in the Jewish culture means princess. She is definitely the daughter that I love more than anything else in the world, but I am not sure that we would ever call her a princess.

Now, language is important. I know that as a teacher I would sometimes have to explain to my kids that using appropriate language in an essay was important, that there's a difference between, say, a social studies essay and an English essay. They're written, sometimes, very differently. The kind of language that you might use, the descriptive language that you might use, in an English essay is not necessarily the language that you would use in a social studies formal essay. As a teacher there's professional language that we use. We have formative and summative evaluations. We use that language to try to make clear the purpose of the action that we're going through, of the assessment that we're using.

So language is important, and titles are important. Names are important, and the name and the title in this amendment is actually important. I thank the hon. member previous to me who read through all of the different titles that have been given to legislation by this government. They were accurate, formal, reasonable names. I think that this amendment speaks to the need to pursue that, to pursue a language and a title that actually describes what the amendment is going to be all about. The title Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act is a very descriptive, formal, and accurate title. This piece of legislation is better off having that kind of title and language than the one that the government has provided for it, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act.

We've heard a lot about what is fair. You know, when we go through the labour code portion of this act, we can see that there is going to be a great deal of debate, I have a belief, as we go through and ask ourselves what is fair. Is it fair that first contract negotiations can be arbitrated after 90 days? Is that fair to the workers? Is it fair to the employers? There's going to be some reasonable, I would believe, disagreement on that.

We have a formula that we're probably going to be talking about called the Rand formula, that looks at how workers are covered by the collective agreement and that if they are, they have to pay union dues. But this is a balancing, this Rand formula, between the worker and the employer and the union. A worker should have the right to decide whether or not they are going to join any organization, including a union, but if they're going to be covered by that collective agreement, the courts have ruled that they have to at least pay the union dues. There's an attempt to find a balance there in the idea that you have the right to have a union, but you don't have the obligation to join it.

What we're looking at here is trying to find balance. Whether or not this act finds that balance and whether it finds a fair balance in some of the pieces of the Labour Relations Code that they're looking to change is, again, up for debate. You know, we face a situation where Bill 17 makes mandatory the collection of union dues by the employer should the union request it. Automatic dues collection by the employer: is that fair to the employer? Is it fair that they should have to outside of the bargaining process? I mean, if they agreed to do that through the bargaining process, that's one thing, but when they're forced to do that and to have the costs and the time and the paperwork that go along with that, is that fair? Many people will argue that it's not.

4:00

When we start to look at this piece of legislation, I believe that this changing of the title of this bill will actually make it better. It's about making it clearer, because there are going to be arguments about whether this is fair and whether it's family friendly. Is it fair that as a worker I could have my right to a secret ballot restricted, that if it reaches 65 per cent, that now is a threshold that will take away my right to a secret ballot? I don't believe that's fair to a worker. I believe that opens the worker to a wide range of perhaps bullying and discrimination. I believe that they should always have the right to a secret ballot. That's what's fair, I would argue, for the workers of this province.

I guess that when we take a look, I would speak in favour of this amendment. I speak in favour of it because I believe that the title is a more accurate description of what this bill is all about. I believe that it sets aside that misleading title, and it allows us to actually debate the merits of the bill. So I would speak in favour of this and ask for the House to support the amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:02 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Smith
Clark	Panda	Taylor
Drysdale	Rodney	van Dijken
Fildebrandt		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	McLean
Babcock	Gray	McPherson

Bilous	Hinkley	Miller
Carlier	Hoffman	Miranda
Carson	Horne	Nielsen
Ceci	Jansen	Payne
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Sigurdson
Dang	Luff	Turner
Eggen	Malkinson	Westhead
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Woollard
Fitzpatrick		
Totals:	For – 10	Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now on the original bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As we dug into Bill 17, my staff identified areas that they felt could use some improvement within the bill, and with that I will rise and would like to please propose an amendment.

4:20

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A2. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended in the following provisions by striking out “48 hours” and substituting “1 week’s”: section 34 in the proposed section 53.92(1), section 35 in the proposed sections 53.952(1), 53.962(1), and 53.972(1).

What this amendment will do is to change the notice requirement for return to work from 48 hours to one week, and this is for the longer job-protected leave provisions within the bill. The current period, for example, for compassionate care leave, which I believe is currently eight weeks: the bill seeks to increase that to 27, if I’m not mistaken. That notice period of two weeks seems a bit long, but a notice period of only 48 hours does not seem like quite long enough.

When we have a longer term leave that could be up to half a year or perhaps even longer than that, the employer is very likely to put in a temporary backfill employee in that place. If that person is there for more than 90 days but less than a year, they would be entitled to either one week’s notice or one week’s severance pay. This amendment seeks to align the notice period for the employee returning to work after a leave with that severance pay to ensure that it is something that is, again, fair to the employer and, I also feel, doesn’t put an undue burden on the returning employee.

This is based both on our own analysis and reading of the bill but also on stakeholders, particularly chambers of commerce speaking on behalf of employers, who have indicated that this would be something they would like to see changed. I have had the opportunity to speak with the minister on this. I imagine that perhaps she will make some of her own comments. I also wanted to thank my team for their hard work in pulling together this amendment in short order.

My sincere hope is that through this amendment we can improve the bill without unduly burdening employees and, certainly, without unduly burdening employers, allowing people to take their leave. I think the reality in practice is that the vast, vast majority of employees and employers would be in contact with one another anyway, but this ensures that employers will not be surprised by a relatively small notice window of an employee returning to work to

rightly claim their position even if they have been away for a long period of time.

It’s my hope that the entire House can support this amendment. I do think it makes the bill much stronger. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’d like to thank the hon. member for not only bringing forward this amendment but bringing it to my attention in advance so that I would have a chance to review it. I think it is absolutely understandable, making sure that employers have adequate time to adjust, particularly in the case of one of these longer term leaves that we were talking about. My office as well had heard from chambers about this. Making sure that we have that flexibility so that employers can prepare, understanding that in so many circumstances employers and employees will negotiate these arrangements – and often there might even be frequent updates while someone is away so that the employer knows what’s happening – make those arrangements together, hopefully, most of the time, and providing this minimum one week of notice is more than reasonable.

I think that the member opposite’s amendment does make sense. I’m happy to support this amendment going forward. Thank you again for reaching out to me on this.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I’ll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to bring forward an amendment to Bill 17, the so-called Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A3. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment we’re proposing here is quite simple. Building on Bill 1 of the very first session of this Legislature, it is to ensure that union dues are not spent on political or partisan campaigning of any kind. The first bill that the government brought forward after the last election was one that enjoyed all-party support. It was something that the Wildrose Party campaigned on in the last election, to ban corporate and union donations from politics. It was a common-sense move. It was a big step in the right direction, at least a step towards getting big money out of politics.

But the job is not done. Currently unions are able to use union dues to finance campaigns of a partisan or, at the very least, political or ideological nature. Unions are able to take the dues from members, dues that members have no right whatsoever currently to not pay – they take mandatory dues from members – and they can spend them on political advertising. You know, we see in Ontario that unions – I think they call themselves the Working Families coalition – spend more money than even the Conservative Party of Ontario on advertising. They are, for all intents and purposes, the largest or the second-largest spender of dollars on advertising during elections in Ontario. We have witnessed in recent years a sharp increase in political union activity.



Now, the role of a union is to bargain collectively for the rights and compensation of workers. It's their job to deal with their employer, to get the best possible working conditions for workers, to get a fair level of compensation. That is the legitimate role of unions.

What is not the legitimate role of unions is to take union members' dues, dues that they're forced to pay even if they don't want to be a member of that union or regardless of the political party that they might support or not support, and to put them towards a political campaign. While it is currently illegal for a union to donate to the NDP or to the Wildrose or to the Progressive Conservatives, it would be quite within the bounds for a union to spend money promoting the ideas of the NDP or, heaven forbid, the Wildrose or the Progressive Conservatives. They could also use it on attack ads, probably not against the NDP but more likely against the Wildrose and Progressive Conservatives.

4:30

This is something that is very commonplace in Ontario. In return for benefits the Ontario Liberals help the unions, and the unions turn around and spend massive sums of cash attacking their Conservative opponents. This gives the Ontario Liberals, which are, for all intents and purposes, more or less New Democrats, a massive unfair advantage in elections. It largely spikes elections in favour of the incumbent government because they're able to do that.

Now, that's not just unfair in terms of elections, in terms of giving one party who favours union boss power an unfair advantage. It's not just unfair from that perspective. It's also unfair from the perspective of union members. In my constituency we don't have a very high rate of unionization, but of the private-sector union members in my constituency very, very, very few, it would be fair to say, support the NDP. It would not be fair to those people that they would be forced against their will as individuals with their own political preferences for whom they support and whom they don't support, to force them to support political campaigns, to force them to support attack ads or promotional ads in favour or against any political party.

Imagine that we had a community association somewhere and the dues were mandatory, but that community association was allowed to take mandatory dues and spend it on ads attacking the NDP for whatever kind of policy. Say there was a policy that they didn't like. It would not be fair to the members of that community association who support the NDP that their dues would be used against the party of their choice. It is a fundamental violation of their basic, individual, democratic rights and their rights to free expression and assembly.

No one should ever have to have their money go towards supporting a political party or a political campaign that they do not support. They should also never have to have their dues used against a political party that they do support. This is basic fairness and equity, and I would hope that the members on the government side would recognize the fairness of this, that passing this amendment would go at least some way in making clear to the public that this bill is not, in fact, what we suspect it's about: trying to increase the political clout of union bosses in Alberta society for the political benefit of the NDP. This is a chance for the NDP to actually do something substantive on this bill to improve the lives of workers. This would improve the lives of workers: to not take the dues of union members against their own will for spending on political campaigns.

You know that it happens. They know that it happens. They know that unions right now have people on their payroll who are nothing but propaganda chiefs. Their job is to sit there and do opposition research and to write blog posts and write propaganda. That's all they do. They do nothing but that. They don't actually do anything

for the collective bargaining of workers. Some of these people on union payrolls do nothing but propaganda all day long.

If those people want to write propaganda all day long, they have the right to do that, but they should not have the right to do that with the dues of union members, the dues of people who have no legal recourse currently to opt out of their union dues, people who must pay dues to a union even if they don't want to be a part of that union. Then those dues can get turned around and used for promoting the partisan propaganda of the NDP.

We know it happens right now. We know exactly who it is and how it happens, and we know that this comes to the direct benefit of the NDP. The NDP benefit from the status quo, where they are able to wash their hands of it and not get their own hands dirty because their union boss friends, who control the NDP – they're embedded in the constitutional structure of the NDP, where union bosses effectively run and own the NDP. They're able to stand back and say that their hands are clean, that they have not gotten their hands dirty, while unions are paying for propagandists with the dues of union members, hard-earned dollars.

People working want to know that their dollars are being spent effectively when they have no choice but to hand them over. When they hand them over to government, they want to know that their tax dollars are being spent smartly and fairly. They don't like it when they see that the NDP spent \$10 million a year on carbon tax propaganda ads. Those ads are an abject and complete waste of money, and most taxpayers cringe when they see them on TV. The good news about when they put those carbon tax ads on is that we're pretty sure that every time people see those ads on TV, the NDP get less popular because it reminds them of what they're doing.

But that is beside the point of it, that it is unfair. It is unfair that taxpayers have to pay for partisan propaganda from the NDP. It is equally true that union members who are paying dues often have no choice because that money comes straight off their paycheque, and they get no choice whatsoever on if they're paying those dues or not, and there is no accountability for how those dues are spent. They have no rights to ensure that those union dues are not going towards partisan propaganda. Even if a majority of the members of that union wanted the money to go to propaganda, if 51 per cent of the members of a union wanted to see their union spend money on attacking one political party or supporting another political party, the rights of the 49 per cent are being violated. We do not have a legitimate right to vote ourselves other people's money for our benefit even if we have the majority. This kind of democracy is like two foxes and a hen voting on what to have for dinner.

Even if a majority of the union vote to support a union boss on supporting a political party or attacking another political party with their dues, the 49 per cent have rights, minority rights. These are real minority rights, the right of the minority in any democratic situation to have their voices heard, to have their own say. In the Legislature the minority have rights. They are entrenched in the rules. The NDP are going to enjoy minority rights in the Legislature very soon, so I hope that they respect them. The minority in any situation needs to have the right to not be forced to have their own money spent on some cause that they would vehemently disagree with.

This amendment is an opportunity for the NDP to do that, to show that this bill is not a transparent partisan effort to help themselves with their own dwindling chances at re-election. I hope that all members of this Legislature will stand up and support it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to speak to this amendment, specifically because it gives me a chance to talk about so many of the important things that our government has done to make sure that our democracy is strong. In this case Bill 1 of our government was banning corporate and union donations. Taking that big money out of politics has been a huge priority for our government, and I'm very pleased with the work that we've been able to do so far, making sure that voters have their voice back and making sure that voters are able to contribute to the conversations that way, making sure that corporate and union dollars are not influencing our political system in that way.

We followed up Bill 1 with changes to our elections financing legislation. I was very proud to bring that forward. It did a number of important things, spending caps and whatnot, but the other thing that it did was put some real boundaries on third-party advertising, making sure that if third-party advertising was taking place in our province, the advertisers would need to register with Elections Alberta that all of those pieces are in play so that we know who is advertising when there are ads on TV either outside of an election period or within an election period. Taking our province several leaps and bounds forward to get big money out of politics and to make sure that we have some of the strongest third-party advertising rules in the country was a priority for our government.

I will not be supporting this amendment. I'm very proud of the work that we've done. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this, but I will not be supporting the member opposite's amendment to our Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act.

4:40

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister of Labour didn't say why she's not supporting it. She talked about a bill that every single member of this Legislature voted for, Bill 1, of the First Session of this Legislature. That's something we all supported. That's what she talked about, that that was a good bill. We were behind it. So we agree with what she just said. We passed the bill about this time two years ago, and it was a good bill. We agree on that. But she didn't say one word, not one word, about why she will not support this amendment, why she does believe that unions should be allowed to take the dues of their members and spend them on partisan campaigns.

Perhaps it's because the minister has a conflict of interest. Perhaps the minister has a conflict of interest here in her re-election. Perhaps her re-election depends on the ability of unions to take the dues of workers against the will of those workers, against the individual consent of each and every worker, and spend that on partisan advertisements at the next election. Perhaps they're counting on big union bosses bailing them out on partisan advertising using union dues. That sounds like a conflict of interest to me.

The minister should at least give a reason why she won't vote for this amendment. She didn't give a single reason. She stood up and said: we passed a bill two years ago; that bill was nice. Thank you very much. That bill is not here before us. This amendment and this bill are here before us right now. She has a conflict of interest on this. In fact, I'm not sure how she can sit here and say that she doesn't because her own re-election is going to hinge very much on the ability of the AFL and big union bosses to force people against their will into unions – because they've taken away the secret ballot – and the ability to use the dues of workers against their own will to fund the NDP's re-election.

I'm glad that the minister supports a bill that we all voted for two years ago, but I want to know why she will not support the amendment here right now. I'd like to hear the minister speak to this amendment, not Bill 1 of the First Session of this Legislature. Let's hear the minister.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a question for the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Not in the speech he just gave but when he was moving the amendment, he mentioned that union members currently don't have the option to opt out of paying union dues, and he said "yet." I just wonder if the member can clarify his position on the Rand formula for the Assembly.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** First, I'll say that I'd like the government to answer the questions that the opposition is asking. This is their bill, and they need to be accountable for it and answer questions for it. It's a sad day when the opposition is more likely to answer questions from the government than the government is willing to answer from the opposition.

But I'll amuse him with what I think about that. I don't believe that any worker should be forced against their own individual decision to pay into an organization with a political agenda. The minority of voters in Strathmore-Brooks should not be forced to be members of the Wildrose Party because a majority of constituents in Strathmore-Brooks voted for the Wildrose and for me. The minority in Strathmore-Brooks have the right to not fund my campaign. The minority of workers also have the right to not fund the NDP's re-election. The same thing goes. Every single worker should have the right to make their own decisions, independent of what union bosses tell them, of what the NDP tells them.

Now that the opposition has answered the government's questions, I want to hear the government answer the opposition's questions. Let's hear them.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A pleasure to rise to speak to this amendment here to the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. I certainly want to echo some of the sentiments that the minister had brought up about Bill 1 and taking union and corporate donations out of politics. Maybe I'll say it a slightly different way. That means that unions cannot put money into the political process.

Perhaps maybe if the member was a little bit more familiar with the workings of a union and how it's structured – you probably know that the membership has the ability to ask about the financial workings of the union, what they do with this money, and they also have the ability to vote within their union. If they think those monies are not going in the proper places, they can certainly direct how that is supposed to happen because, as everybody knows, a union isn't, you know, the president and the secretary. The union is the membership – okay? – so they are the ones that direct that.

The minister had also made some remarks around Bill 35 with the advertising boundaries that were put in, so I don't think the member needs to worry about how advertising is going to be done. There's disclosure around that, and Albertans, of course, will be able to make their decisions on their own.

I would certainly encourage the member to maybe reach out, learn a little bit more about the structures of how unions work

internally, how their finances work, and I'm sure some of his concerns could be addressed in those fashions.

With that said, Madam Chair, I'm not able to support this amendment at this time, and I would encourage others in the House to not support it as well.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this is a really good amendment. You know, it just, frankly, gives clarity and clarity that would be needed. If you're truly wanting to not have these political donations going from the union, then there's absolutely no harm. It says, "No deductions made by an employer and remitted to a union pursuant to this section may be used for political advertising." What's wrong with that? If you're clearly saying that there's no money that's going to be going towards this – that's what I've heard – then why would you be afraid of having this amendment? I think it's a great amendment.

You know, you had talked about it. The government had put forward Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act. There again they're using that word "fair." The government likes to use the word "fair." We're using "fair" with this bill, and we were using "fair" back then. I don't see why we keep saying "fair." In this case fair to whom? Fair to the union? Fair to these union employees? Not the union employees because they don't have a chance to say. So I don't think that part is fair, but it is for the unions themselves.

This is a good amendment that I can support because it does give clarity and it would help out the bill itself, Madam Chair. So I will support this amendment. Thank you. [interjections]

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. members. Just a reminder to all members if you could please speak through the chair, not to each other.

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment A3? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to rise to speak to the amendment because I'm opposed to it for a variety of reasons. I think that the members opposite, you know, are dripping with hypocrisy when they come up and bring something like this in, especially when we talked about third-party advertising, when we made sure that the playing field that we're working in is fair for all parties. Like, they would never introduce something that would allow the Rebel media to have limited freedom of speech. They just wouldn't do that. When you look at third-party advertising, when you look at being able to make sure that there's an equal playing field, we've already done that. That's why it was a reference to the election financing act. That's why we looked at those things.

4:50

The thing is that this is a pattern of the Conservative Party, a pattern that we saw when you look at whether charities could participate in any form of political discussion. And what happened there, Madam Chair? They're currently revisiting it because what happens when you limit the capacity of an organization to be able to talk to political conversations is that it reduces their capacity to advocate for the needs of that community. So for charities this has an incredible impact. When it's a group that wants to end poverty and they can't talk to any political parties, it reduces their capacity to be effective. It reduces their capacity to meet the needs of the members that they're supposed to talk about. For unions, they represent the needs of labour interests, so in certain cases, if there

were prevalent issues for union members in a specific sector, they could advocate. Those are political decisions that need to be looked at.

Yes, they are part of the third-party advertising thing, and doing this would be unfair because it's not applied across the board. They are not saying that they are committing to making sure that the super PACs or all of these other ways of making sure that political advertising that favours them in other ways are reduced, but they are willing to make sure that a specific group of people, specifically, workers, Madam Chair – workers. They don't want workers to have a voice. That is incredibly, incredibly shameful for the opposition to say that they have their backs but then come in and say: but as long as they don't have a voice.

At the end of the day, we have to make sure that we lay the groundwork for the democratic process to proceed. You're going to have voices from various spectrums, and that's the point of democracy, to have a political discussion. They just want to preclude it from happening altogether. That is actually not invoking a democratic process; that's invoking a one-sided system, Madam Chair, so, no, we will not be supporting this amendment proposed by the opposition.

I think they need to do better. I think they've seen the willingness of the government to consider the various amendments as they bring them through. We saw one amendment go through today, but when they come up with amendments like this, they're specifically doing it to clarify their position that they do not want to have workers with voices. So, no, I will not be supporting this amendment, and I hope the rest of the Chamber does not as well.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Once again, Madam Chair, the NDP confuse the rights of workers with the rights of union bosses. They conflate the two. They are not the same. Union bosses are the heads of organizations that people have no choice but to belong to regardless of what they as individuals have decided. Workers are people who are actually paying into those organizations.

This would not hurt the rights of workers to be heard. Workers will always, every individual will always have the right to make a donation with their own money voluntarily towards whatever message they want to get out. If they want to donate their money voluntarily towards an NDP union-friendly organization, they all have the right to do that. As a free man, as a free woman they can hand over that money as an individual. That's the way political advertising should take place, outside of the party structure.

The same thing goes on our side except we don't have organizations engaging in any kind of propaganda based on the dues, the mandatory dues, of people. Nobody is forced to put a single dollar – not a single dollar – against their will towards communications or advertising of any kind on the right in Alberta. No one is. The only advertising in Alberta that people are forced to pay for, the only politics that people are forced to pay for against their will are on the left. So when you have private-sector workers in my constituency who are in unions who overwhelmingly do not support the NDP, why should they be forced to take their hard-earned dollars and hand them to them for their floundering efforts at re-election? It's not fair, and it's not right. They are the only party that is benefiting right now from the mandatory dues of workers. Workers have no right not to hand over money to organizations which are effectively propaganda arms of the NDP.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

We've seen here right now that the NDP have made their intentions known. They're going to do what the Kathleen Wynne Liberals in Ontario do. They're going to use unions. They're going to use union bosses. They're going to scratch their backs, and the union bosses are going to come and scratch their backs back. That's what they're going to do. That's their best hope at re-election, and we're seeing it here because if they had any interest in actually getting big money out of politics from big businesses or big unions, they would vote for this. That's why they're voting against it, because they know it's their only shot at getting re-elected. I know you agree with me, Mr. Chair, nodding your head.

Anyway, we now have seen the way the government is going to vote. It's transparent what they're going to do, but they're going to be on the record, and I'm going to be able to go back to Strathmore-Brooks and tell people. I'm going to be able to tell private-sector and public-sector union members in my constituency that the NDP have voted right here and right now to take their money against their will to try and get the NDP re-elected, and we're going to see how they react to that.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to hope that as the member is going back to talk to his constituents, he also, you know, mentions what I have been talking about earlier, about this reference to big union bosses. They are accountable to their membership, okay? The union is the membership, okay? Those folks are voted in on a regular basis. If they were not doing things that the membership liked, I'm sure they would be voted out. So I'm hoping that the member there will be mentioning that to his constituents and how the accountability – both what they do and the money that is spent are accountable to the membership. I'll hope he'll mention that when he's heading back.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:58 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Hunter	Taylor
Drysdale	Rodney	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Smith	

5:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	McLean
Babcock	Ganley	McPherson
Bilous	Gray	Miller
Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Hoffman	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Payne
Connolly	Jansen	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Sigurdson
Dach	Loyola	Turner
Dang	Luff	Westhead

Eggen	Malkinson	Woollard
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 38

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on Bill 17. The chair will recognize the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise, and I have an amendment if you'd like to pass it around.

**The Acting Chair:** I'll just wait for the original. That will be amendment A4.

Please go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended in section 33 in the proposed section 53.9(9)(a) by adding “seven days after” before “the last day”. This amendment addresses what I believe to be, in a way, a streamlining of this bill a bit so that some services are easier for Albertans to access. In this case our amendment is aimed at making the transition from compassionate care leave to bereavement leave simpler.

Now, none of us want to be in a situation where a loved one that we're caring for dies, and cases where that person dies after an extended period of illness can be very difficult. We should do our best not to add any more hardships to people in this difficult time, so my amendment today is an attempt to build the bereavement leave into the compassionate care leave. Normally compassionate care leave would end at the last day of work of the week in which the person being cared for died, and bereavement leave could be applied upon the death of that person, for additional leave of one week after. What this amendment would do is change the end of the compassionate care leave from the last workday of the week in which they died to seven days after the last workday of that week. This way people would be able to take that extra week of time that would normally be allowed for a bereavement leave without having to apply for another leave. This would remove any additional concern during a period when people already have so much on their minds.

With that, I would ask that all members of the Legislature support this amendment, which I believe is a good, common-sense improvement to the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Chair, it's nice to see you in the chair. I'm just getting the bound copy of my Bill 17 out. I was listening to the member opposite talk about adding “seven days after” the last day when looking at “compassionate care leave ends on the earliest of the following occurrences.”

**Mr. Rodney:** Sounds like a yes.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Well, I'm going to read it, and let's find out.

For an employee to be eligible for a leave, the physician must first certify that. It's editing section 33, section 53.9(9)(a), “the last day of the work week in which the family member named in the medical certificate referred to in subsection (4) dies” and adding “seven days after” before “the last day”. Sorry. I'm just a little confused here. I need some time.

**Mr. Rodney:** Do you want to just say yes?

**Cortes-Vargas:** No. I'm going to understand what the amendment is before I vote for it.

**Mr. Rodney:** You don't understand the amendment?

**Cortes-Vargas:** Yeah. It just wasn't a clear explanation.

So, Mr. Chair, I'm just going to go through this. I'm going to take my time to understand what the amendment does before voting on it.

**Mr. Cooper:** Here, I'll trade you spots.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Yeah? Okay. Go ahead.

**The Acting Chair:** All right. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this very, very reasonable amendment. I think that my hon. colleague from the northern portion of Alberta laid out the facts of this amendment very clearly. You know, all of us have had the misfortune of losing a loved one, and there is a lot happening around that period of time. Particularly, I think of someone who might have the death of a parent. They're working and have children, and they're dealing with the death of a parent as well as figuring out what needs to happen at home as well as taking care of kids and planning funerals and dealing with wills. Perhaps they're even the executor of the estate.

5:10

All that my colleague efforts to do is to remove one little headache, one extra step that would require that individual to go back to their employer and ask for another type of leave or an extension of that leave. What the amendment clearly does – and I appreciate that the government might need a couple of minutes to put this together. Listen, I think it's important that we legislate appropriately and thoroughly. That's just one of the reasons why you should have sent this bill to committee because then you would have had the opportunity to have a larger discussion on this. Perhaps we could have called in expert testimony for amendments just like this. In fact, we could have adjourned the amendment. I know that the government members are experts on adjourning amendments at committee so that they can come back to them, which is reasonable. Unfortunately, in the ebbs and flows of Committee of the Whole it does present a bit more of a challenge when trying to make decisions in a much quicker fashion.

We have before us an amendment that takes one small item off the plate of a grieving individual, provides them with the opportunity to make – it changes the way that they have the leave so that we can allow them to focus in on the things that are actually important instead of going through the paperwork with their employer. I don't see any significant challenges here. I think it's more than reasonable that this is the kind of thing that we would like to do as a Chamber.

We've heard the government speak at length about the importance of compassionate care, at length about these types of leave situations that are important to individuals, that their employment shouldn't be put at risk for situations just like this. And if you believe all of the doom and gloom that the government talks about when they speak about an employer and how horrible they are, this is the type of thing – not getting the leave right is what an employer might use to reprimand an individual. We certainly wouldn't want that. Now, I don't believe that that's the case in the vast majority of employment-employer relationships.

I think that my colleague is providing a reasonable solution. He's not asking for a massive, significant change. I see no reason why we shouldn't be able to move on this amendment and move on it quickly, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to do so.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much to the member for bringing forward this amendment. Essentially, what this amendment would do in the case of the death of the family member named on the medical certificate is give an additional seven days in a form of bereavement leave, is my understanding. What we have tried to do very much and one of the founding principles of what I've brought forward was to mirror the federal employment insurance leaves and to mirror the system that exists federally, giving Albertans job protection so that they could access those existing federal EI leaves. For that reason, we've worked to not deviate from the federal leaves.

What we did do, though, was bring in a bereavement leave. Your amendment, I think, could potentially cause confusion because someone may take those additional seven days and then also request a bereavement leave. Is that your intention? Should someone be able to do both of those things? We heard through the consultations and the round-tables with stakeholders a desire for clear leaves, clarity between the leaves. We did consider doing some sort of combined leaves, and it was employers who specifically said: "We would like to have distinct leaves. We'd like to know what our employees are entitled to. We'd like to go through that."

Certainly, the member opposite just recently spoke to that, that many employers and employees will come to their own arrangements. What we're talking about in this legislation, in employment standards, is minimum standards. What is the bare minimum that every Albertan has the right to expect? In many cases, particularly when dealing with tragic circumstances, three days of bereavement leave is not adequate for many people, and alternate accommodations may need to be made. What is in our employment standards is the minimum.

While I appreciate the intent behind this amendment and I see the good intention that is driving it, for clarity, to make sure that we're mirroring the federal EI leaves and to be responsive to employers, who asked us to make sure that we had some of those clear basics defined going forward, I will not be supporting the amendment. But I do, certainly, in drafting employment standards, encourage all employers and employees to continue to work together productively to make the arrangements necessary that they need.

I'm very proud that we have legislation that mirrors the federal employment insurance leaves and will provide job protection for Albertans who have not had that. It's certainly a big step forward. I'm glad that we were able to bring forward the improvements to compassionate care leave and the addition of a bereavement leave, that previously wasn't there, as well as many of the other leaves that we've introduced to the benefit of all Albertans.

Thank you to the member.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Yes. Thank you, Minister. It was my belief that the information was shared with your department before, and if it wasn't, that's too bad. You know, I'm a little confused that this is called the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. Maybe it should be the federal-friendly act if you're more worried about mirroring the federal act than you are about families.

Unfortunately, I lost a son – he was killed at 21 – so I know what bereavement is in these situations. You know, it's difficult if you

haven't been there, and I hope that none of you have or ever will. When you're in that situation, you're not thinking clearly. You can't be filling out forms and asking for bereavement. So this would just make that simpler and more family friendly.

I'm not worried about the federal government. But I don't want to criticize. Good for this. I mean, when I lost my son, I was a farmer. We don't worry about unions and agreements, and I'll tell you that the whole community came together, did my farm work, did the work, and I could take all the time I wanted. So you don't need all these laws.

I get it that people in the city are union people, and you need the laws. You don't have the common sense or employers and employees that respect each other and work together.

To make it family friendly, I think this is probably a pretty good addition, but if you're more worried about mirroring the federal act, I get it. You know, I know that you guys have the power to vote against it, so I'm just making my case.

**Ms Gray:** I do want to say thank you because your office did send it earlier this afternoon, so I appreciate that. I do see the positive intent here, but given the large number of changes for Alberta employers, those who have been just providing the minimum, certainly not all employers, making sure that we have clear communication about each leave, its length, and how that works is one of my priorities as well as responding to the feedback that we received from employers during the round-tables and then having that mirroring so that when someone qualifies for the federal leave, they know that they have job protection that matches that.

Thank you very much for thinking about ways that we can make Alberta families and their lives better.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:19 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Rodney	Taylor
Drysdale	Swann	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd
Babcock	Ganley	McLean
Bilous	Gray	Miller
Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Hoffman	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Payne
Connolly	Jansen	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Sigurdson
Dach	Loyola	Turner
Dang	Luff	Westhead
Eggen	Malkinson	Woollard
Feehan		

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on Bill 17. The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Today I'm extremely proud to be speaking to the importance of Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. This government is bringing positive change by recognizing the changing face of Alberta and the conditions that workers face. This government recognized a need for change.

With this bill we are taking huge steps in modernizing the workplace to help protect workers and their families from losing their jobs from everyday challenges and seeking to reinforce the notion that workers are the backbone of this province. These fair and modern and balanced workplace laws protect the rights of hard-working Albertans, support Albertan families, and help our businesses stay competitive without sacrificing the health of our citizens.

This legislation is long overdue. Alberta hasn't made any serious changes to workplace laws for nearly 30 years despite the changing demographics and makeup of this province. As someone who has worked closely with organized labour, I know how important this legislation is to working people of Alberta. As a former active union member I worked hard to protect the rights of my fellow workers and local union members. Now as an MLA I have the opportunity to enhance the protection of workers all across this province.

Many people are asking: why now, or why should we make big changes on the back of a recession? Let us be clear. We recognize your concerns but know that enhancing workplace protection and ensuring the rights of people who are working hard to provide for their families can't wait and simply shouldn't wait. This has been put off too long, and this party is proud to stand with the working-class people of Alberta and let them know that we are putting their interests first despite calls for delay.

We have consulted with many stakeholders, those who represent small and large businesses as well as those who represent workers all across the province. We have listened to Albertans, and we know that protecting the working people of this province is what this government was elected to do. We conducted a focused review over the period of five weeks, and it became clear that the time to act was now. We worked with groups such as the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, the city of Medicine Hat, and Unifor while also receiving close to 7,000 submissions through e-mail, letters, and online surveys regarding the labour code. All of this feedback has been taken into consideration.

We have heard from countless Albertans with many heart-breaking stories. While I won't delve into these stories again, we know that there are problems with our labour system, and they need fixing. Whether it be caring for your sick child, burying a loved one and having time to grieve, being able to recover from illness without the fear of termination, or being able to escape domestic violence without the pressure to return to work after a traumatic experience, these things matter.

Groups from across the country and across the province are seeing what this government is doing and recognizing that we are taking this province into the 21st century. Let me be clear. The rights of workers should not be a partisan issue, not in 2017 nor ever again.

Some key changes that we are making include making sure that overtime is recognized and paid out properly, something that has long been in place in other jurisdictions across the country. We are making sure that youth are safe while still providing them the opportunity to gain important life skills by enforcing the minimum age of work of 13. This is an international standard, and we are happy to make sure that we can protect children from pressure to work at such a young age. Education shouldn't be sacrificed for spending money or work experience.

To those who question the results these changes will have on business, I implore you to do research on how satisfaction and job

security play out in the morale and efficiency of workers. Workers who aren't sick or stressed perform better, and businesses reap the results. If someone comes in sick, not only is their productivity down, but they become a health concern. Whether it be doing a job dangerously or spreading illness, the ultimate costs of these things vastly outweigh the cost of letting someone recover. Businesses suffer the costs of illness, and so do taxpayers. Getting someone healthy as quickly as possible should be the preferred modus operandi as opposed to having someone prolong their illness and burden a workplace or emergency room. These same points are pertinent when it comes to grieving, caring for sick children, or escaping domestic violence. If your mind is elsewhere, your productivity suffers, and so does your mental health.

People in the fields of organized labour are giving this government a pat on the back. We want to make sure that those who want to organize have the opportunity to do so without intimidation from employers, who often create a narrative through guilt and scare tactics, acting as if workers uniting to secure their rights makes the company a victim. Our proposed system for certification is simpler, quicker, and it avoids undue influence that can occur between votes.

In response to the media and the public's concern about eliminating the secret ballot, we are not doing that. We have decided to shift to a hybrid system, where the secret ballot votes will take place if unionization approval is not overwhelming. For situations in which the Labour Relations Board finds 40 to 65 per cent of workers seek to join a union, a secret ballot will occur. In a situation where that number is over 65 per cent, a considerable majority, a vote would not be required as it would be unnecessary.

We have protected Albertans through making sure that continuing care facilities are included in essential services.

5:30

Before I close, I want to thank all the Albertans, stakeholders, and the groups that reached out to this government to let us know your concerns with the current employment and labour landscape in this province. This government takes pride in its consultation practices with stakeholders and the public, and this legislation comes as a result of that. Taking Alberta forward requires us to protect and ensure the rights of families, workers, and unions just as much as those of large and small businesses. We have titled this bill the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act because fairness and Alberta families are two of the core interests of this government and the priorities of this bill.

Thank you to my fellow MLAs and colleagues who helped craft this important piece of legislation. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for having the courage to enact these necessary changes. Advocating for working-class Albertans is one of the major reasons I sought election as an MLA, and this legislation, that I'm sure will help countless Alberta families, is a point of pride for this government and me.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** The chair will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to stand and speak to an amendment to the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, Bill 17, and will circulate the amendment.

**The Acting Chair:** This will be referred to as amendment A5. Please proceed.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Well, I'm pleased with almost all aspects of this act, but this is one of the issues that I think either the minister has overlooked or has been subject to strong

lobbying by the agriculture coalition, by some of the large landowners and industrial agriculture operations.

I would hope that we might consider paying overtime to people who work overtime. It's a basic principle of employment. It operates in all other industries. Indeed, we made significant progress with Bill 6 in getting some basic health and safety rights and workers' compensation and recognized farm workers as equal to all other workers in this country. I applaud the government for finally bringing that good legislation in. I therefore was a bit shocked to see exemptions for overtime for farm workers, when exploitation has been the history of farm workers for a hundred years, and clearly it's going to continue in some, not all, workplaces where there is unethical or exploitive leadership. By exempting farm workers from this overtime pay, it's a clear indication that the agriculture coalition has had a lot of influence in the working groups. In fact, I know they've dominated some of the working groups and softened the right to equal treatment in the workplace for paid farm workers.

The opportunity here is to recognize that these rights under both our Constitution in Canada and as part of the charter of human rights, which gives all workers the right to a safe workplace, to compensation for injury ... [interjection] Who's whistling?

**Mr. Cooper:** Sorry.

**Dr. Swann:** I don't need that. Thanks. I'm having enough of a time concentrating.

... the opportunity to recognize these rights and not treat them as second-class employees. It's disappointing, and it's certainly unjust. It's saying that some workers are more equal than others.

Now, I recognize that farm work is different, that ranch work is different, and that it indeed may be reasonable to expect farm workers to work a 10-hour day and not expect overtime, but when we get beyond 10 hours in a day or over 60 hours in a week, surely we could recognize overtime as we do in other workplaces. I doubt that there's a single person in this Legislature that would not expect to be paid a fair overtime wage when it got to over 10 hours in a day or 60 hours in a week. I really doubt that any of us would feel fairly treated if the boss said: sorry, you're going to just have to work overtime and accept regular pay. That opens the door to exploitation. It opens the door to increased injuries and accidents when people are fatigued. When they feel unjustly treated, they're going to be rankling and stressed and not feeling good about themselves or their workplace, and that is not good for anybody.

It's understandable that change is challenging in the ag sector. Paid farm workers are already exempt from time-off provisions under this bill. They don't get the same time-off provisions in a week or in a month. They're exempt from that. Surely, then, we could recognize significant overtime, beyond 10 hours a day and beyond 60 hours a week. That seems pretty fundamental, especially to a government that talks about equal pay for equal work and human rights in the workplace. They certainly have championed that for unionized workers, and I know they believe that all citizens should have the right to form unions. These are some fundamental rights that we fought and died for over generations here, and we're now finally dragging the agriculture sector into the 21st century on these issues. Giving them second-class status as far as hours of work and overtime is disappointing, and I hope that the minister can find a way to acknowledge in this bill that something has to be addressed in terms of overtime, even if not the usual over eight hours of work in a day or 44 hours in a week. Let's at least compromise a bit and extend the right of agriculture operations to only start paying overtime after 10 hours in a day and 60 hours in a week. That's not a big sacrifice to the industry.

I've made my pitch, Mr. Chair, and I think that all fair-minded people will see the wisdom of this not only in terms of health and safety but in fairness and just treatment of paid farm workers. I'm not talking about family members. I'm not talking about extended family members. I'm only talking about those who are hired to do a job as they would be hired to do a job in any other sector of society and have a reasonable expectation that if they're pushed beyond 10, 12, 14 hours a day, which I know many farms require at certain times of the year, they should be paid reasonably and, if not equitably with other jurisdictions, at least get some recognition that overtime requires extra recognition.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member for the amendment and for the advocacy that you've done on this issue. Part of Bill 17 is the continuation of our dialogue with the farm and ranch community that really continued with our technical working groups, so bringing together farm and ranch community members, owners, labour organizations, and stakeholders to work together as a group to create recommendations for the government. The technical working groups spent significant time talking about the Employment Standards Code and brought to government a series of recommendations. We took those recommendations and posted them online and invited all Albertans to provide their input and their feedback as to those recommendations and where the technical working group had landed. Based on the feedback from all Albertans and looking at the recommendations with Bill 17, we've tried very much to respect the farming and ranching way of life and to accept some of that good advice from the technical working groups and to find that right balance between worker needs and employer responsibilities.

5:40

In the case of overtime the technical working group had recommended to us that employees be exempt from overtime provisions. They provided as their rationale that in most jurisdictions in Canada the agriculture sector is exempt from overtime, pointing to kind of other jurisdictions and that standard, that the hours in the agriculture sector are unpredictable because of the nature of the work, that overtime rates would only lower the base pay rate, which would not increase total earnings of employees and, furthermore, cause complications in calculating pay. After this technical working group, which was intended to be a mix of voices from all sides of the table, came together, the recommendation that they came to was the exemption. I think a large part of that was having to do with just the seasonality of the work and the difficulty in enforcing fixed-hour provisions.

The technical working group's recommendations were something that we took very seriously as we were moving forward with Bill 17. There are areas where we did end up disagreeing with the technical working group because we wanted to find that right balance. One of those areas was making sure that vacation pay was calculated on total wages, not just a maximum of 44 hours per week, so when someone does do that extra work during a time when increased hours are needed in a day, making sure that vacation pay is calculated on top of that.

Generally speaking, looking at what the technical working group recommended – and that consensus recommendation was very important to our government. Moving forward with that overtime exemption, with a series of changes that are, you know, a big change for the farm and ranch community, I think, and wanting to make sure that we are finding that right balance between workers'

needs and employer responsibilities, making sure that we're respecting the process that we engaged with the community on through the technical working groups: for those reasons, I'm afraid I'm not going to support the amendment. I absolutely do understand the intention of it and understand some of that reasoning, but making sure that we do respect the farm and ranch way of life and the work that the technical working group did as we move forward are the main reasons for my decision to not support this amendment.

I look forward to hearing any other colleagues within this Chamber, their thoughts. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A5 as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on the bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 17? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am rising and wish to move an amendment to Bill 17.

**The Acting Chair:** That will be amendment A6, hon. member. Please proceed.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended by striking out section 111.

Mr. Chair, in Canada we are fortunate enough to have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the descendant of the Bill of Rights, and contained in the Charter, in section 2(c) and (d), are the freedom of peaceful assembly and the freedom of association. This essentially means that people also have the freedom to not associate. In other words, people have a right to determine if they want to be in a union or not.

If people choose not to be members of unions, they should also have the right to determine if they pay dues to a union they are not part of. Why would I pay dues to an organization that I am not a member of? It is fundamentally wrong to be paying good, hard-earned money to something you don't want to belong to and never had a decision in joining. Forced union membership is like the Borg from *Star Trek*: you will be assimilated, and resistance is futile. But resistance is not futile. Resistance is what makes us human beings with the right to choose whom we wish to associate with.

A 2002 poll found that 76 per cent of Canadians supported the statement that employees should not be legally required to pay dues to a union that they don't want to join. Over three-quarters of Canadians believe in this, yet we are stuck here holding to a Supreme Court decision from 1946 that says otherwise. The princes of reason, as John Ralston Saul called them, the Supreme Court justices of the day, imposed collective rights overtop the individual rights.

I wonder if the Rand formula would survive a Charter challenge today. It is reasonable to think so. It's currently not automatic that an employer will collect union dues from its employees and remit them back to the union. This is one more way that the government is removing choice and flexibility from Albertans. It shouldn't be automatic. Employees should have a choice, and if union dues must be deducted and the payroll system can't be amended to change the deduction for all, those employees should be able to have their deductions directed to a charity.



When you see unions spending millions supporting left-wing political ideologies or parties and being formally and constitutionally part of the NDP, it's no wonder employers and employees want no part of providing them funds. You end up with a situation where the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour takes a leave of absence, goes and runs for the NDP, and then, after he loses, he takes his job back. That campaign and leave were funded by union dues and donations.

Mr. Chair, this is why I have brought forward this amendment, and I challenge the Members of the Legislative Assembly to support individual rights over collective rights. People have a right to determine if they want to be in a union or not. This is the freedom of association. Consequently, people should not be required to pay dues to a union they are not part of as a condition of employment. I encourage the members of this House to support this amendment and respect choice.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Section 111, that the member is suggesting we remove, is referred to colloquially as the Rand formula. The reason that it's called the Rand formula is because it's essentially named after Justice Ivan Rand, who made a Supreme Court ruling essentially making sure that in the labour relations field there is a compulsory check-off of union dues to be deducted when a trade union is bargaining for employees in a bargaining unit.

That Rand formula is, in practice, used in nearly all jurisdictions, so it is considered the standard. It's currently not required in our legislation, but most unions would bargain it as part of their collective bargaining when they're creating their first contract. Here in Alberta not including that Rand formula can be considered an unfair labour practice, so by practice our Labour Relations Board historically makes sure that the Rand formula is accommodated and included in every collective agreement. We are codifying what is the standard practice not only here in Alberta but in other jurisdictions.

5:50

Making sure that we have updated our legislation to account for Supreme Court rulings is an important part of the updates that we are bringing to Alberta through Bill 17. Making sure, again, that we put into our legislation something that is already happening through the Labour Relations Board, through the collective bargaining practices in Alberta is what's happening with our section 111. I will not be supporting the amendment brought forward by the opposite member because, again, it does not acknowledge that there has been a Supreme Court ruling on this, that this is standard practice in Alberta, and that it is included in the legislation in other jurisdictions.

I would, as a final note, mention that there is an exemption for religious reasons to the paying of union dues, and that is standard in the legislation across Canada and, I believe, in other areas. I think what we've put forward in section 111 is reasonable, is mainstream, and is standard practice here in Alberta today.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment. I think one of the things that I found the most

frustrating when I was a member of a union was this pressure or bullying tactic that other members used to have people be a part of the union. In fact, if there was anyone that spoke out against the union in this particular place of employment, the workplace relationship became very strained. I think that we need to do more things that provide the options for employees of unionized workplaces to opt in, opt out of this mandatory membership. Even if there are situations where membership isn't technically mandatory, functionally it can be mandatory by the way that other members treat those who would choose or try to choose not to be part of the union.

Amendments like this provide more flexibility when it comes to joining or not joining, and I think that it is critically important that we do all that we can to minimize situations in workplaces where abuse takes place. The union has an equal responsibility for that, but certainly in my case the union was the propagator of the challenge. I specifically remember a time when I was concerned with our contract. I was working in a large hotel chain at the time that had about 30 different properties, so I was calling all of the other properties – the unionized ones, the non-unionized ones – to find out what sort of contract they were receiving in pay for the exact same job and years of experience and all this stuff and then expressing some significant concern because many of the non-unionized properties actually had better wages.

Certainly, we were in the lowest of the wage category, so I started asking questions about this. I remember clearly the shop steward sitting me down and talking about how we do things as a group and that, "You know, this is going to create a challenge not just for us but for you," this real pressure from the union. If I had had the opportunity, I would have certainly opted out of that particular union.

Anything at all that we can do to prevent these sorts of situations and allow more flexibility in the workplace – listen, if the union is going to exist inside a workplace, I certainly believe that people should be able to opt in or opt out. If this amendment provides any sort of flexibility when it comes to the freedom of association – the freedom to be part of a union, the freedom to choose not to be part of a union – to have more sense of what happens with your union dues, to make a path that's easier for your union dues to not be collected in the first place, all of these sorts of scenarios I think are a positive.

I think it's disappointing that the government is choosing not to pass the amendment. It continually reflects exactly what this piece of legislation is about; that is, doing everything that's possible to appease the large unions, to make it easier for unions. You know, the government always claims that they're on the side of the worker. Well, what about when the worker doesn't want to be part of the union? What about that? Are they on the side of that worker, or are they only on the side of the union in this case? It's certainly disappointing as the government continues to reveal exactly what this piece of legislation is about. It's very clear that it's about making things better for the unions. I hear often the government saying that they're making things better for Albertans, but in actual fact this legislation is clear evidence that they're making things better for the unions.

I encourage members of the House to support the amendment. I encourage all members to reflect upon and consider the fact that not all unions behave in a manner that reflects well on the union, that not all unions behave in a manner that reflects well on this government, and that the government makes claims that they are only here for the worker when, in fact, they are here for the union.

I know that, in my experience, it was very clear that the union's number one job was to take care of the union. I'm not saying that

that's the case everywhere, but that was certainly my personal experience. This particular union didn't reward initiative. It didn't reward ingenuity. It didn't reward people wanting to go above and beyond. In fact, other members did the exact opposite. I would have loved to have been able to not be a part of it. I would have loved to have been able to not have my union dues going to an organization that I certainly didn't support.

If there are things that we can do that can allow that to happen, that make it easier, and also where the union would be respectful of that, of an individual that may or may not want to be involved in

the union, I think that that would be a net positive and, hopefully, a net positive for the union as well. It makes the union more accountable to the members when it's significantly easier for them to associate with the union or not.

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. The time is now 6 o'clock. The committee stands adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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