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The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, December 11, 2017

Day 64

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 2 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Vacant: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 11, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Statutes Repeal

36. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that, pursuant to section 3 of the Statutes Repeal Act, SA 2013, cS-19.3, the Legislative Assembly resolves that the following statutes, appearing on the list of statutes to be repealed which was tabled in the Assembly by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General on April 3, 2017 (Sessional Paper 126/2017), not be repealed:

1. Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Trails Act (2004 cB-2.5);
2. Forest Reserves Amendment Act, 2004 (2004 c9) s8;
3. Health Professions Act (RSA 2000 cH-7) ss155(1)(c), 156(n), (u), (aa), scheds. 1, 13;
4. Health Professions Amendment Act, 2008 (2008 c34) ss12, 13, 15;
5. Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Amendment Act (RSA 2000 c34 (Supp)) s8 (adds s8.1(3)).

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. I'm sure all members fully understand this and will support this very clear and simple motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any members who wish to speak to Government Motion 36?

Seeing and hearing none, the Government House Leader does not want to close debate?

Mr. Mason: Do you want me to close, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: That would be wonderful.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I don't think that that's necessary. I think the motion is self-explanatory.

The Speaker: I wanted to hear it all again.

[Government Motion 36 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 30

An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans

Mr. Nixon moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has not provided Albertans enough time to be consulted on the specific changes being

proposed and, further, has not provided assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment December 6: Mr. Coolahan speaking]

The Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 30? The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak in the House with regard to the reasoned amendment on Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans. There are a multitude of reasons why this bill should be moved to a reasoned amendment, a lot of strong reasons why it shouldn't be read now, quite frankly. Once again, I think one of the primary reasons is because we have the NDP here pushing through a piece of legislation on a very tight timeline, a very large piece of legislation that actually needs significant opportunity to be examined, to be reviewed, to be understood, to be introduced to the public so that they can understand it. But none of that is going to happen. It just seems that from day one of this session there has been a process, an attempt to make sweeping legislation changes toward the end of the session with little or no public scrutiny. I think Albertans deserve more, really should have more.

For instance, let's just look at some details here. The current legislative logjam here is a result either of the inability or else deliberate manipulating by the current government to push everything to the end. Since the fall session began on October 31, this government adjourned debate early 11 times in the first 10 days. So for the first 10 days the government itself adjourned debate early, stretched things out, took their time, filibustered their own bills, and then at the very end here introduced five bills, totalling more than 565 pages, in the last seven days. That is a logjam, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP had little or no legislation at the beginning of the session, and now we're trying to ram significant bills through, as I said, 565 pages' worth, in less than seven days or about seven days. These are hundreds and hundreds of pages of new laws just in a few days that make it extremely difficult for Albertans to understand what's going on, to have opportunity to hear about it, for the media to focus on it. For that reason alone, I quite frankly think that this bill needs to be set aside for now and opportunity taken to look at it.

It really should have been, as the previous motion, sent to a standing committee, but we're past that stage now. It was defeated by this government because, again, I believe they just want to push it through. They're more interested in their ideology than anything else and particularly not interested in hearing from Albertans. A study by all parties on some sort of standing committee and from various stakeholders from around the province could have had a say except that that was defeated. Unfortunately, the reality is that that does take time, and it seems to me that that is not what this government is willing to take in order to get good legislation in Alberta. To get a bill of this size right, with so many pages, it needs to be mulled over. It needs stakeholders to consult on it. But once again we see very little evidence of consultation, no economic study to prove the bill's value or costs or any of that.

Just like the consultations a while back that took place in the middle of the afternoon, when all the people in the coal communities were at work – they do them in the middle of the afternoon so nobody can come. It doesn't work out to be consultations. Remember that little piece not long ago? We heard about it from the coal community. The call for a consultation when

everybody is at work: this is the type of consultation this government too often likes. Bringing in diverse groups, though, with diverse ideas, bringing in some real facts to an all-party committee is definitely not their style.

The reality is that mines, power plants, and many other industrial workplaces actually have an incredible culture of working safety. Hard hats, safety vests, steel-toed boots, permission to refuse work: so many of these things are already in place. I actually wonder how many of them were consulted on this bill and what they would actually have to say about Bill 30 although I doubt that they had the opportunity to even know it's coming. I doubt that that's the crowd that this government really wanted to hear from.

We found out on December 6 that there were going to be close to 200 layoffs beginning as early as April 1, when TransAlta mothballs Sundance 3, 4, and 5, taking 1,100 megawatts of electricity offline. I want to know how pleased Albertans are with the layoffs that have been perpetuated by the NDP in addition to the changes to OH and S and the WCB brought forward in this bill. It's supposed to be a bill to protect workers, Mr. Speaker, but the act won't protect workers if they have no work because they won't be at work. This all ties together. There needs to be the kind of policies and regulations that actually encourage workers to be able to have work, give them good jobs, and keep them safe. That's the objective, but clearly that's not going to be the unintended consequence. I don't think that's the type of change that Albertans voted for.

Sadly, though, this government is not intent on listening. If it's not on their agenda, they'll not listen, and they've proven time and time again that they aren't interested in listening. It's really quite a shame that they voted down the committee amendment because I'm not sure that the Workers' Compensation Board itself was even consulted on this bill.

There are some good pieces of thought in this legislation, but there are some big kinks in it that need to be worked out, ones that could cost the province dearly if not discussed. Unfortunately, all of the omnibus bills this government has pushed forward will cost the leaders of future generations time to redo and fix.

There are many people from our province, from different paths in this province, who work in the interest of workers and the interest of employers and those who work in the interest of the public. They could have been consulted. We're reminded that the Chief Electoral Officer was not consulted. He said so in writing. I seriously doubt that the WCB was consulted either on this particular bill. The very people who have to administer it probably didn't have any opportunity to put input into it, to say anything about it because that is the pattern and the established way that this government works. I also know that the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association was not consulted. They put it in writing as well. So I have some serious concerns about the level of consultation and public engagement not conducted by the government on these bills.

7:40

In fact, a letter was sent just recently to the Minister of Labour from the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association. That letter expresses strong concerns with Bill 30 and straight out requests that third reading of the bill be delayed until there's time for consultation. How many stakeholders from various companies and government agencies would actually come forward, if they had time to hear about the bill, and express concerns regarding the many problematic areas? We could have time to fix this thing right if it was done right. Therefore, due to the many complexities it should not proceed.

The amendment that my colleague has brought forward calls for the bill to not be read a second time because the government has

failed once again to provide any assurance that a full economic impact analysis has been done, as is the pattern. We can almost be confident that there has not been one done, or if it was and the government's own staff warned about the cost but the NDP buried the report, only after we FOIP it will the warning come to public light, much after they've been able to push this bill forward.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of consultation, the lack of openness and transparency, the urgency to push many bills forward in the last seven days of this whole session: for those reasons, this bill really should not be advanced past this stage. We really don't know how this bill is going to affect the well-being of Albertans, and quite truthfully that's pretty sad. Our own government has no idea how the changes in this legislation will affect Albertans' jobs in this province and how many people will lose their jobs. People's livelihoods are at stake, yet this government doesn't know what the outcome of implementing a bill of this magnitude and size will be. That truly is tragic.

The government needs to do some due diligence to get things right. They need to take a look in their own backyard and see the devastations they themselves have been inflicting. Maybe the reason the NDP voted down the referral amendment was because they didn't want us digging too much into the annual report of the WCB and into the reality that of 163,718 claims this last year, only 3,041 received a review request. Less than 2 per cent – it's actually 1.8 per cent – of all claims were even requested to have a review. A pretty small number. The begging question is: where did the urgency for these kinds of sweeping changes come from? Who was asking for it? Who was pushing for it? Who stepped forward publicly for these things? It wasn't there. It's driven by ideology.

Or maybe the year-end funded ratio for claims, 133.8 per cent: is that something that needs to be covered up by this government, so they're rushing through? At 133 per cent that's a pretty good average of, you might call it, overfunding.

Or the fact that the WCB has over \$10.5 billion in funded assets against only \$7.9 billion in liabilities. There's a lot of extra money sitting there. Last year, in 2016, the WCB took in almost a billion in revenue from employee-paid premiums, \$994 million. The fund also, though, at the same time earned \$750 million on investment income. Now, imagine if the investment income displaces the premiums and becomes even greater than that. There are just so many things about this bill that need to be looked into and considered.

I could also ask the question: is a cap of \$98,000 realistic – or maybe I should say sustainable – in terms of maintaining the ability of the WCB to stay solvent? The average wage in Alberta is just over \$60,000. Where did the need for almost \$100,000 to be funded by employers come from, and is it a sustainable number? I don't know. Many things need to be asked about this bill.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder the NDP would not take Bill 30 to committee, with no thought to provide the potential economic impact, no consultations. This is a huge load on the small businesses of Alberta primarily, and the small businesses are our primary job creators and innovators. This is a download of more costs on the municipalities and the nonprofits, that are the lifeblood of so many communities large and small, and they, too, are going to be bearing additional costs here that nobody has even stopped to think about or ask about. We know the government will demand that they comply with the bill, but they'll provide nothing to help them with the costs. Are they supposed to fund raise from donors to support the government's grand schemes? Is this how you tax people even more after the grand carbon taxation plan? All of these questions are just as important as the changes to OH and S and the WCB that the NDP have proposed.

With that, I give you even more reasons why this bill should not proceed, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of the reasoned amendment because it's the only reasonable thing to do. Thank you.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I rise today to speak to Bill 30, I'm honoured to do so, and it was a pleasure to walk through the courtyard between the Federal building and this building.

The Speaker: My apologies. I didn't see the other member. There was a question under 29(2)(a). Is that correct?

Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, under 29(2)(a). I was enjoying the member's speech here in talking about how the government had brought this legislation in. He talked about how in 10 days at the beginning of the session the government ended the days earlier. That's 10 days, so I guess four days a week. That's actually two and a half weeks we spent in this six-week session ending early. Of course, now we're near the end of the session, and all these big bills have been dropped on our desks here to review.

Obviously, you know, we have members on the other side saying how important this is. After 15 years this needs to be done, of course, but they seem like they want to ram it through, and they want to ram it through at the end of the legislative session. They don't want to have any committee work done on it. They don't want to do any proper consultation. The businesses, the government that's going to be affected by this, the workers who are going to be affected by this: nobody has had a chance to look at this and have input on this because this has just been brought in at such a late time in the session here. Of course, now the government is bound and determined to get this pushed through.

He mentions these things, and I just wanted to know if he could maybe continue in that vein and just talk a little bit more about how this is going to affect business and how pushing this through without proper consultation – now, of course, they talk about what they did beforehand, before they built this legislation, but now that they've created this bill, there should be more consultation because now we see exactly what the government wants to do. The businesses and the departments of the government can now look at this and say: "Okay. Now we understand where the government is going with this. Now let's look at it and let's see what the cost is going to be to businesses, what the cost is going to be to the organizations and to government and how it's going to affect the individuals that are affected by this." I wonder if he could maybe just continue in that vein a little bit and just give us a little bit better understanding of what that means and how it's going to affect us as we go forward.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I do think it's a very concerning situation we have, just a rush job to literally logjam all of the big, important bills into the last few days of session. It truly pushes legislation through so quickly that there isn't time for the important stakeholders to even know that it's out there, let alone scrutinize it. There's a real lack of accountability and transparency that occurs because of it. The biggest risk, quite frankly, is going to be to Alberta's recovery. We have a government that wants to create innovation, that wants to diversify our economy, that wants to grow our economy in lots of ways. Yet when you continue to push these

kinds of bills through that do in effect create real costs on the backs of businesses, that really slow down their ability to do that, the reality is that that innovation, that new business creation, that opportunity gets squelched with the load that they have to carry.

7:50

In western society the reality is that it's because of the freedom of wealth and the freedom to explore beyond the bare means of survival that we're actually able to develop so many new and creative ideas and the arts and all kinds of things. If we take that away from our small businesses, we will lose that innovative reality, and we will lose our strongest employers, which are our small businesses.

The unintended consequence – I don't say that this is deliberate. The reality is that these will be unintended consequences that have not been thought about, that have not been measured. Instead of fixing the system, they may in fact make the climate for our businesses, our employers, and our innovators even more difficult and could end up breaking up our system even more than we have seen from the economic downturn.

The reality is that it isn't just the economic downturn; it's the policies that go with it that have hampered our businesses. While the goal of this bill should be to ensure that Albertans, all Albertans, who work hard every day, are safe and healthy. As I said, if they don't have a place to go to work, it doesn't do much good. We really do need to think through the consequences of what this bill could do with regard to costs and the burdens that it's going to place on business. Now, in a downturn is really not the time to be doing that, when many of them are having a very hard time surviving as it is.

I understand the need to change, to review, to update things, but let's do it in a meaningful and thoughtful way. Let's take the time rather than ramming a whole bunch of bills through in the last couple of days. Let's take the time to do it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to come to this House this evening to speak on behalf of Albertans. I was reminded of that honour as I walked here through the courtyard from the Federal building. To see all the children and the families taking in the Christmas spirit: it's just a reminder of what we're really here for and who we're meant to serve. It is an honour, and it is an honour to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents about Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans.

I'd like to start by again thanking the government for extending the presumptive coverage to paramedics who suffer a cardiac event just coming off shift or within 24 hours of their shift.

I also understand that much of this bill is bringing about changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workers' Compensation Board that are overdue. It's essentially, in many cases, evergreening those policies. While I support this initiative to update the legislation and I'll be voting for the passage of this bill given the chance, I do have some concerns . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I would just remind you that you're speaking to the amendment. Are you aware of that?

Mr. Fraser: Yes.

The Speaker: Yeah. Great. Thank you. Keep going.

Mr. Fraser: This is why it is important when we're speaking to this amendment tonight – and I urge the government to listen to what

the opposition is saying to them. It's important to recognize that their policies do affect Albertans in many ways and certainly our small businesses. I hope that the government, if they were to pass this bill, don't just walk away, that they would maybe listen in committee to some of the suggestions from the opposition, the third party, and other members about this crucial bill. I hope that the government will continue a dialogue with business to make sure that they can bear the additional costs – there are additional costs – and ensure that we're not making it too burdensome for small businesses to succeed, especially in this fragile opportunity to recover. We know that business confidence is up.

Again, speaking to the reasoned amendment and this bill, I hope that the government would listen to opposition members as they continue to speak about it. Even if, in the end, the government passes this bill, I hope that they continue to consult with businesses to make sure that businesses can actually afford the extra costs of this bill. Small businesses are definitely the backbone of our economy, and we need to foster them. We need to encourage them and help them grow.

The other piece of this, as I understand the legislation, is going to help Albertans that are on workers' compensation and occupational health and safety, to protect them. Again, the government needs to show Albertans that they can continue to be nimble and adjust course if these bills do not plan on working or they don't pan out and work. It's important to consult and make sure that this passage is serving the very people, with additional supports, that I believe Bill 30 is intended to help, with the Workers' Compensation Board. Again, as part of the reasoned amendment I do think it's important to pass these rules and make sure that they're in place to serve Albertans, but I would also caution the government to listen to the reason of the reasoned amendment to allow things. I hope that things would go to committee on a more often basis in this House so that we can truly serve Albertans in a much better manner.

Mr. Speaker, it was my honour, again, to speak to the members of this Chamber. Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-South East?

Speaking to the amendment, Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today in support of the reasoned amendment to Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans. That was put forth by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre on the grounds that the government has not provided Albertans enough time for consultation on the specific changes being proposed and, further, has not provided assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, due diligence is a business term that means proper research and analysis is complete before steps are taken to complete the transaction. In law it means exercising reasonable care to avoid harm to other persons. There is a reason law firms make lots of money performing due diligence: because it takes a significant amount of time while all factors are being taken into consideration to protect a client, the public, a business, or whomever they may be representing. Due diligence takes time, something this government has not spent enough of in reviewing this bill with the public now that it has been tabled in this House.

Since this bill was tabled, businesses, interest groups, private citizens, and other organizations have been flooding members on this side of the House, asking for help and telling us how badly this bill will impact them. I have to assume that the members opposite are also getting the same feedback, so why haven't they been

listening? The government knows it's not enough to simply do public consultations before the bill is written. Much of the push-back comes after it has been introduced.

I'm realistic that the government isn't going to rewrite this bill, but as we have discussed over the past week, members opposed to this bill have been scoffed at and ridiculed for a number of reasons, and many of us are simply highlighting the initial feedback we have received from our constituents. The government may not agree with what we have to say, but will they go as far as mocking Albertans for commenting on a bill they don't like? I can't imagine it. Nevertheless, it's true.

Given that the government has failed to consider the economic impact of this bill, it stands to reason that Bill 30 must not proceed to second reading. An economic impact study takes into consideration three factors: direct impacts, indirect impacts, and induced impacts. Combined, these impacts equate to the total economic impact that a potential action might have on the economy locally, provincially, and nationally. When considering Bill 30, what are the direct impacts? What will the immediate results be from this piece of legislation? How will this bill affect employees, employers, the injured, and WCB and OHS industry workers? What about the indirect impacts? How will the bill affect the families of workers or employers? How will the supply side of this manage procedural changes and buying patterns? Finally, the induced impacts. What will the bill do to local economies that are dependent on the small and medium-sized businesses that this bill will affect most? A full economic impact study accounts for questions like these and countless others, which is why you can imagine such a process takes a long time to complete.

Mr. Speaker, the government is going to tell us that they have already accounted for all this. They're going to tell us that they already did the due diligence, but in response I ask: how? How did you consult Albertans in all 87 constituencies over the past week? I certainly haven't heard anything about the government visiting the people in my own riding. It's impossible. The government has been here since tabling this bill, with the exception of the Premier, who has been on her social licence, let's copy the UCP and Jason Kenney because pipelines finally matter tour, to select cities across Canada.

Preconsultation is only a part of the process. Many Alberta businesses and private citizens are just now waking up, and they are just now seeing the damaging effects this bill is going to have. If the government isn't going to listen to these people now, then the only option there is that I see is to refuse this bill a second reading.

8:00

We tried to have this sent to committee, but of course the government voted that down. There was an opportunity that we could have taken it to committee, where we could have brought in experts, we could have brought in industry, we could have brought in government, we could have brought in individuals. We could have brought in all those different people to have the input, looking at this bill as it stands right now, which is substantially different than the consultations before the bill was drafted.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things this government could have done to make this a far more open and transparent process and to have the proper consultation that's needed. We don't know what the unintended consequences will be because this government hasn't looked into them yet. We've seen other bills pass in this Legislature, multiple bills passed in this Legislature, where we on this side of the House warned the government of the negative consequences of their actions, what this could do, and we've seen this government over and over pass those bills, ram them through. Then we've seen them come to the Legislature again with other bills

to correct the damage that they created in the first bill, and if that isn't enough, then they'd have to pass another bill to solve the problems created by the second bill that was supposed to fix the first bill. We've seen that in this Legislature.

This government, as much as they can stand here and say, "We've looked at it all. We've got it all under control. It's great. Just trust us," Mr. Speaker, it doesn't cut it. It doesn't cut it. It won't cut it for Albertans. So we need to have this chance to review these things properly.

Obviously, economic impact assessments: those are things that we can see what the cost will be to businesses, what the cost will be to government and how it will affect things that people just can't see at a quick glance. That's why industry wants to see this. We've seen the Chambers of Commerce. They wanted this to go to committee. Obviously, I would expect the government must have consulted with them, and after seeing this, the Chambers of Commerce still says: we want this to go to committee.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's a lot of work that could be done to this yet. I know the members opposite have talked about how long it's been since this was last reviewed, 15 years. That's a long time. I'm sure it needs to be reviewed. I'm sure there are things that can be corrected. But with this, the way it's been done, it doesn't give that opportunity to be done properly. There's just not the time that is required.

Now, in this bill we've seen the government members talk about refusing unsafe work and how important that is and how it's so great that it's covered in this legislation. But, Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to go on a website here the other day, and this is actually the Canadian Union of Public Employees website, CUPE. This is their website. This is an article from June 12, 2014, on the website. Now, June 12, 2014 – that's a year before this government was elected, so long before they were elected, a long time from this period of time right now – they're talking about how great this is, giving the workers the right to refuse unsafe work. I'm going to read this.

The right to refuse unsafe work is one of the three basic health and safety rights achieved by the labour movement, along with the right to know about the hazards in your workplace, and the right to participate in workplace health and safety decisions.

Here's this organization, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, lauding the work that they've done to give workers the right to refuse unsafe work. So this isn't something new.

In fact, they say here – look at this:

Order wallet-sized right to refuse cards for your local for free in our web store.

You could even get little cards to pack around that can remind you about the right to refuse unsafe work. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is from June 2014, a year before this government was elected.

Now, it does go on to break it down province by province. Province by province I'll start with Alberta, of course, and this is what it says about Alberta.

The law in Alberta states that you shall refuse all unsafe work if you believe there is an imminent danger (that is not normal for the occupation or activity) to yourself or others caused by a tool, appliance, equipment or work procedure at the worksite, according to Section 35 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

There it is. Again, this is from the Canadian Union of Public Employees website, 2014, how it spells it out.

It goes on to say:

Here's how you can refuse unsafe work:

- (1) Notify your employer at the worksite that you are refusing work because you don't think it is safe, and state your reason for refusal.
- (2) The supervisor must investigate and take action to eliminate the danger. There must be a written record

of your notification, the investigation, and action taken. A copy of the report must be provided to you.

That seems pretty clear: notify, supervisor investigates, paper trail. Looks like it's covered fairly well there.

- (3) If, in your opinion, a danger still exists, you can file a complaint with a government occupational health and safety officer.

So if you're still not satisfied, you still have opportunities and options.

- (4) The officer shall investigate the complaint, and document actions taken in a written report. A copy of the report must be provided to you.

Again, another report on the same situation.

- (5) If you are not satisfied with the officer's report . . .

So if you're not satisfied with the first report and not satisfied with the second report

. . . and recommendations, you must legally return to work, but may appeal the report within 30 days.

Still an opportunity to appeal.

And it says here:

You cannot be disciplined or dismissed for complying with the legislation, according to Section 36 of the Act.

There it is, Mr. Speaker, how it's spelled out as far as refusing unsafe work in Alberta, again, long before this government was elected.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Decore got up and talked about there having been no review in 15 years, and when I hear that, I think: it should be done right, then. If it hasn't been done in 15 years, there's no reason to ram it through in just a few days. Do it right. Do the proper consultation.

The Member for Calgary-Klein said that this has been a government priority; it's long overdue. Ramming through legislation at the end of the session: is that how this government treats its priorities? I would hope not. I would hope that if this is a priority, it should get all the due care and attention that it could possibly get.

I'm no expert on any of this stuff, but there are people that are experts. I don't believe there are any experts in this House. But there are experts out there. There are experts that would come and present to a committee. They would be happy to be consulted by this government, to give their input. [interjections] Unfortunately, it seems like the government, from the chatter here on the other side, think they're experts on this, Mr. Speaker, and that's a pretty sad state, when we think that we have all the expertise we need in this House for such wide-ranging legislation as this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I talked earlier about this. You know, during the first part of the session the government shut down our days early. We didn't even have evening sittings. In the afternoon we were getting sent home early. Either they didn't have their work prepared for this Legislature, or they were delaying bringing in the most important and biggest legislation for the end of the session so that they could ram it through before Christmas. I don't think that's the way we should be doing business here.

This is no way to prove accountability to the Alberta people. This is no way to prove transparency to the people. We don't know what the costs will be with this because the government hasn't done that economic analysis. What are the costs to the WCB? What is the cost to small business? What is the cost to the government? They'll have to abide by this, too. Every time you have more legislation, you have more costs. I don't believe that this government, of course, has looked at anything about reducing regulation anywhere, regulation that doesn't make sense. It's outdated. I don't see any removal of anything that's outdated or anything. All I see is more regulation and more cost to the WCB. And without the proper analysis I don't think that we can say that we are doing our due diligence here.

8:10

Now, the Member for Calgary-Klein suggested at one time that it would be insulting to workers to send this to committee. Well, no. I think it would be insulting to workers to ram something through that hasn't been properly vetted and hasn't been properly dealt with and hasn't been properly consulted. That's what would be insulting. We're not delaying safety here. We want to make safety better. We have an opportunity to make things better here. I mentioned earlier about the Chambers of Commerce. That would have been one of the organizations to consult with.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any questions for the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky was talking about consultations and due diligence and the number of issues that we are trying to address in this bill. I know there is a valid reason why we brought in this amendment, to have more meaningful consultations, so I would ask my hon. colleague to continue to share his thoughts on this.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. Yes. We know that this government has had problems in the past with unintended consequences. I talked about that earlier, too, where they would come up with a bill and we would warn this government about the consequences of that bill, the unintended consequences, what would happen if they passed this legislation. Of course, they would pass it anyway. Then, of course, they would come back in the next session with another bill to pass to solve the problems that they created with the first bill they passed.

Then, of course, there were situations where the government ended up in lawsuits over legislation that they passed, where they were suing Albertans because of legislation they passed. We told them: be careful what you're doing; you need to look at the whole picture here. The government seemed to think that contracts written in black and white were somehow – I don't know – some sort of underhanded deal or something. The contracts that they were dealing with were black and white. They were written. They passed legislation that caused these companies grief, and then of course the government ended up suing them. In fact, they were suing Albertans, using Alberta tax dollars to sue Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, that's why this government needs to do the proper consultation. It needs to look at these bills and needs to allow people to look at these bills after they're produced. It's one thing to go consult with them before and then create a document and then say: I hope you're happy with it. I guess that's what they're saying. What they need to do is go back to those same people and say: this is what we've come up with based on what we heard from a wide range of people. I'm sure that not everybody they consulted with agreed with every single thing in this bill, but now that they see what the government wants to do, I'm sure they would have an opinion about every single thing in this bill if they had the opportunity to look it through and have some sort of opportunity for input, but obviously there's no opportunity for input when this government sets this legislation down on the table near the end of the session and starts pushing it through with multiple big bills all at the same time.

Of course, they consider every single one of these a priority, but if they're priorities, why aren't we taking care of them properly? Why aren't we properly consulting? Why aren't we taking the time to do this right?

We've seen the situation where the Member for Edmonton-South West, I think, brought forward a bill, and I think the consultation number he was talking about was that around 30,000 people had responded. You know what happened to that bill, Mr. Speaker? That bill went to committee afterwards. After all that consultation it went to committee for more consultation in order to try to get it right. Now this government brings this bill here, which is substantially larger – I'd probably say a hundred times larger – and they've dropped it on the table here and said: hey, we're done consultation; we've got this under control; just pass it. Well, I don't buy it, and I don't think Albertans are buying it, and I don't think small businesses in Alberta are buying it. They don't have any time at this time of the year to look and see what the costs of this will be to them.

Some of this bill comes into play January 1. This legislation hasn't even passed yet, and within two weeks they're going to be implementing some of this bill. And this is through the Christmas season, when either some businesses are incredibly busy or some businesses want to shut down and finally have a break to spend time with their families. Instead, they'll be going through 150, 200 pages of a bill to try to decide how it's going to affect their business. Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's fair to Albertans. I don't think that's right for Albertans. I think there's an opportunity for this government to do the right thing and help to pass this amendment so that we can have the proper time to consult, so that Albertans can be consulted, and so that small business can decide how they feel about it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any members who wish to speak to amendment RA1? The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a tremendous honour for me to be able to rise to speak to some elements, to an element of this bill, anyway, because I'm very proud of our government for bringing it forward on behalf of the people of Alberta, the working people of Alberta and, frankly, their families and pretty much everybody who lives in the communities with those people. This is a very, very long, long overdue step forward on behalf of workers in this province.

You know, let me begin with just a few of the points that have been made. There are people out there saying, "Well, no one in this building is an expert on the matter," and there's no question that that is definitely true. No one is an absolute expert. But many people on this side of the House do have some experience with this matter, Mr. Speaker.

I was privileged when I was at law school to help work with a professor who wrote the Canadian textbook on workers' compensation law. I was privileged here in Alberta to be appointed to the Appeals Commission and to serve on the Appeals Commission and to hear appeals of workers' compensation cases. I, of course, spent many years representing injured workers, and of course, when I was in B.C., I also had the opportunity to sit on a panel of three that rewrote the health and safety legislation in B.C. So I've got a bit of experience on it. Of course, I along with our caucus members all understood that this was an area that had been long overdue and forgotten and neglected in Alberta at the profound expense of working people in Alberta and in a way that was absolutely unacceptably different than the standards that existed in the rest of this country. That's why it makes me personally very proud to be here.

The members opposite right now are playing the game of suggesting that this is really about more consultation. Let me say very clearly – and I will certainly talk about that in a moment – that

this is not about the need for more consultation. This is about the members opposite not wanting to take these important steps forward to protect workers, to protect their families, and to keep them safe. That is the decision that is being made here right now by the members opposite as they engage in these ridiculous conversations about the need to delay.

But before we talk about why it is that that's not really an issue, let me just talk a little bit about some of the statistics and some of the people that I've come to know in my time who've been subjected to the laws here in Alberta. You know, there was a time, back in the '90s, when we had a certain health and safety regime, and under the old PC government they decided that they would change the rules, and they created this new thing called deeming. It meant that when a worker was injured and they were permanently injured as a result of an unsafe workplace, they weren't necessarily entitled to compensation for the duration of that injury even if it meant that a disc was permanently ruptured, or maybe they'd gotten a steel bar in their back and were told by their doctor that they would never lift more than five pounds ever again in their life. Even if that was the case, they couldn't anticipate having benefits for the rest of their working life.

I mean, I had so many cases that I worked on, but I remember in particular one lovely woman who was a nurse. She had trained as a nurse for two years in England. She'd gotten her nursing degree back at the time when you could become a bedside nurse with a two-year degree. She worked bedside in England for about 20 years, taking care of patients. She moved to Canada, and she continued that work at one of the hospitals here. She was getting close to retirement. She worked bedside, giving medications, moving patients, helping them to walk up and down the hall, all the things that nurses do. One day a patient fell, and she reached in to stop that patient from falling, and she put out her back. She had to go get surgery, and she was never to be the same. She was about 55 years old. She hadn't lived in Canada long enough to be eligible for CPP.

8:20

She was told that there was a job in Calgary as the director of community services nursing, where she would have 300 nurses reporting to her, and that she, because she was a nurse, could get that job. Therefore, she experienced no earnings loss, and they cut her off. That is what happened to her. That was the kind of ridiculous stuff that was happening under the previous piece of legislation.

We walked in and said: "You know what? You have a duty to accommodate. You have a human rights duty to accommodate." Not only did the employer say, "No, we don't," but the Workers' Compensation Board said: "No, we don't. What's the duty to accommodate? That's not our issue." It's a function of the human rights code, Mr. Speaker. It's the function of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. But systematically – systematically – our Workers' Compensation Board thought it was a bit inconvenient to actually give workers the benefit of that right, so that woman was left. Now, thankfully, we were able to appeal and take it all the way to the Appeals Commission, and ultimately she got her benefits. But for every worker that had to go all that way to get those benefits, there were five others who simply gave up in the fight.

Let me tell you a little bit about economic consequences. You know what happens when that happens? That problem doesn't just disappear into the ether never ever to be something to be measured as an impact on our community, on our economy, if you want to talk about economic consequences. That problem remains in our community. It is a person who is suffering, who has had their rights taken away from them, and they are still our neighbour. They are still our co-worker. They are still our relatives. That's the thing.

Just as a little, interesting sidebar, we have AISH in this province, and we have reasonably generous – most people on AISH wouldn't say that, but relative to the rest of the country it pays more than most. I would say that at least a third of the claimants on AISH right now are people who have been unable to secure the benefits to which they are entitled under the Workers' Compensation Board. Mr. Speaker, what that means is that the taxpayers of Alberta are paying the cost for employers who are not putting in place the kind of safe work practices that would stop these injuries from happening in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This is not just something that happens because people are – what was it? – "stupid is as stupid does." I'm still waiting for the apology from the UCP for that because you owe it. You deeply owe it.

Nonetheless, it is not because of that. It is because we had a system that was not fairly compensating injured workers. How do we know that? Well, if you look at it statistically, people will say: "Oh, well, we don't have as many injuries in Alberta per capita. There are not as many. They're not reporting them to the WCB, so clearly it's not a problem." But, of course, claims can be suppressed, as was identified in the report that preceded this piece of legislation. When claims are suppressed, the stats are invalid. The only claims that cannot be suppressed, the only stats that cannot be hidden are when people die. Interestingly, Alberta has the highest fatality rate in the country for the very reason that we have not taken health and safety seriously and we have not taken compensation seriously. It has been an injustice that has gone on for decades in this province, and the folks over there should be ashamed at trying to delay us finally moving forward on it.

We are nonetheless moving forward, Mr. Speaker, and we are doing so after a tremendous amount of work ensuring that Albertans know what we are doing. I believe it was in the fall of 2016 that a WCB panel issued a discussion paper and went to all Albertans and said: "Here are the issues that we are looking at right now. Please give us your input." And, of course, they did, by the hundreds, by the thousands. Merit Contractors bought billboards, starting in the middle of 2016, telling everybody: "Go. Make sure you get in there, because the government wants to change your WCB." I mean, they were out there campaigning up the yingyang, fund raising off it, no doubt. The reality is that that's what they were doing, and that was out there in the summer of 2016.

As a result of that, in the spring of 2017 a final report was completed and released. But that was not enough – no, no – because the commission went further. They released their report, and they put it out again. They said: "Okay, folks. Here's what we heard from the thousands and thousands of people that engaged. Here's the report that we've written. We're going to put it out to you again. What do you think?" From June 2017 to September 2017 off they went. They consulted again, and people had more time to look at the finished report. This act that you see now is the product of that process, a year and a half. For the love of God, do you want to send it to another committee? Come on, people.

You know, the fact of the matter is that there are recommendations after recommendations from decades ago begging the government of Alberta to step up and to fix this system. There were judicial inquiries from fatalities saying: step up and fix this system. They've been trying. All these folks did was ignore it; they did everything they possibly could. Now they want to put it off even further because they just don't want to see finally some fairness for workers on this important issue.

Do you know what else, Mr. Speaker? We are the only province in the country – the only province in the country – that doesn't have mandatory joint work-site health and safety committees. The reality is that anybody – any working guy, any working woman, any

working person out there – knows that the way to create safety in the workplace is to have the front-line worker sitting in a room with the employer, who has the ability to make the decisions about resources, has the ability to make the decisions about the tools, has the ability to make the decisions about the work process. Those people have to be in the room, and the workers, who understand how it makes them unsafe, have to be in the room, and they have to be on a level playing field. They have to work out the way to make the job safe. That's how you create safety in the workplace. That is how workers and employers have been working to create safe workplaces from Newfoundland to B.C. to the Yukon, everywhere except in the province of Alberta under the leadership of those guys over there.

What they want us to do is wait even longer – wait even longer – make it even harder, stand by while more families suffer the consequences of fatalities and injuries at the work site. I just don't know how you look your constituents in the eyes. I just don't know how they do. I mean, we're all MLAs. All of us know that the single biggest thing that you will hear about from your constituents are the injustices that they experience as the result of things going wrong at the Workers' Compensation Board. It's a nonpartisan issue, for heaven's sakes, and if you think people are just making it up when they come to your office, give your head a shake. It's real. It is absolutely real.

We have an opportunity, all of us, to come together thoughtfully, carefully, to move forward, to get this legislation passed. We do not need to dither any longer, Mr. Speaker. We had decades of dithering over there. We have now had more than a year and a half of thoughtful consultation, collaboration led by experts, with massive amounts of engagement from unions and employers and workers and experts across the board. There is absolutely no reason to delay this. There is every reason to move forward and to do so in the best interests of and for the best outcomes for Albertans because, as you may have heard, we're really interested in making life better for Albertans, and this will do it.

For those people – I'm sure not many but maybe one or two members opposite – who think that the strategy here is to engage in the Chicken Little routine and claim that this is somehow going to put everybody out of business, rest assured that the WCB has engaged in an analysis of this. They tell us that the cost increases will be minimal and in the long term perhaps even less because of the prevention that we're going to be seeing through health and safety. But, in any event, they will not go any higher than what they were in 2010, which, to be clear, was still about half the national average, Mr. Speaker.

Costs are not the issue here. Safety is the issue, fair compensation is the issue, justice is the issue, supporting those families of injured workers is the issue, supporting our communities is the issue, and it's time to get the job done.

Thank you.

8:30

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it was very disappointing to hear the Premier speak just now. She, of course, had to start off by saying that this side of the House does not want to implement safety and protection. Very, very, very wrong. If she says that this side of the House is wanting to delay the implementation of safety and protection, then she is also saying that the Alberta Chambers of Commerce is against safety and protection of workers. You know what? That's very, very disappointing, to have the Premier stand up in this House and accuse the Alberta

Chambers of Commerce of not caring about their workers. That is absolutely shameful.

Now, in our constituency offices we hear lots of complaints about the WCB. We want to see the WCB fixed. Now, the Premier herself has said that the system is broken, but do you remember what happened two years ago, Mr. Speaker? This very government passed Bill 6, and you know what they did with Bill 6? They forced every farmer in Alberta into WCB ... [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Loewen: ... a system that she herself said was broken. That's what they think of farmers, to put them in the same situation as the rest of Albertans, in what she claimed or said was a broken system.

Now, she said that we should be ashamed of delay. Mr. Speaker, this Legislature started sitting on October 30. October 30. What are we at now? We're at December 11. We're sitting here considering this legislation on December 11. This government has been in power for two and a half years. So when they accuse somebody of dithering, who's dithering? Two and a half years of dithering; six, eight weeks of dithering. We had the opportunity to send this to committee, and we could have been dealing with this right now in committee already, but you know what happened? This government turned it down. They turned it down. They voted it down, the opportunity to go to committee and have more input and make this legislation better. There are some very important parts of this legislation – very important parts – but there are parts that could use some improvement.

I know that organizations like the Chambers of Commerce want to have more input. They want to have the opportunity to have more say in this. Do you think, Mr. Speaker, that the Alberta Chambers of Commerce wants to see their workers hurt? Do you think they want to see them suffer from a system that's broken? I don't believe so. I don't believe so. I know those people in the Chambers of Commerce. I do business with them. I meet with them. I sit down with them a lot. Their members are a community. They do not want to see their workers hurt. They don't want to see them mistreated by the WCB or anybody else.

Now we have an opportunity to fix this, Mr. Speaker – we really do – but let's fix it right. Let's not ram it through at the end of the legislative session. Let's not wait till the end. That's dithering. Dithering is sending us home early the first two and a half weeks of the session, and then in the last session we're here till 10 o'clock, midnight, whatever. Happy to do our work. We'll be here till 2 in the morning if we have to be. I don't care. I'll be here till 4 in the morning if I have to be, but let's get this right. Let's not sit here and throw comments like that back and forth. That's not right. That's not helping the workers of Alberta.

What's helping the workers of Alberta is if we'd look at this properly, have the proper input, the proper consultation. That's what will help the workers in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we had an opportunity to see other bills brought forward by government members, with months and months of consultation, tens of thousands of people having input on it, and then going to committee. I would like to see this so-called consultation. What did I hear? Eight round-tables? Wow. Wow. And 1,300 in an online survey or something like that? I mean, come on.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Anyone else who wishes to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the amendment to Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans. On this side of the House we are all

for more protection and benefits for injured workers. On this side of the House we are all for employers' access to assistance during appeals. On this side of the House we want to protect the workers from reprisal for complying with the act. There are so many good things that we'd like to support.

Today we saw some spirit of co-operation in this House, Mr. Speaker. When the Deputy Speaker was in your chair, we debated the bill brought by my colleague from Drayton Valley, and that was passed in collaboration with the government benches. The same with the other one, brought forward by the MLA for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, my neighbouring riding. We were so happy. We thought that this government was on the path of listening and collaboration. Now here we go. The Premier comes and started lecturing. [interjections] Yeah, yeah. She's asking for an apology. You know who should be apologizing? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Panda: She should be apologizing for calling Albertans sewer rats or Chicken Little . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. member, I want to . . .

Mr. Panda: . . . or embarrassing cousins.

The Speaker: Hon. member, please.

Speaker's Ruling Language Creating Disorder

The Speaker: Need I remind everyone that, particularly at this late time in the evening, continuously we hear – I'm trying to remember the exact clause.

Some Hon. Members: Standing Order 23(j).

The Speaker: Standing Order 23(j). Continuously I hear that. I don't think that the kind of rephrasing of words like "sewer rats," which was already mentioned in this House in an earlier session, helps at all with respect to the debate. Again I want to urge you all, particularly the hon. member, to be careful about using those kinds of words because they do cause disruption in the House.

Please continue.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, you just heard Madam Premier calling, "Chicken Little," and there was no objection to that. When you talk about disorder, there are so many things that would cause disorder. We're not starting it, but we are responding to it. Just to be on the record.

Debate Continued

Mr. Panda: As I said before, Mr. Speaker, we are here to support the good clauses of the bill, but like my colleague explained before, our job is to do due diligence, not to rubber-stamp whatever the Premier and the cabinet bring to this House. That's not why we are here. There are so many reasons, explained by the previous speakers. When the Premier says that we are not interested in that, that's not entirely correct. We are actually interested in passing good legislation, but don't expect us to rubber-stamp. Like the previous speaker explained, we're not delaying it. They had the opportunity to bring this bill much earlier. We're willing to go as long as it takes to make this bill better, so don't blame us for your incompetence and inefficiency.

8:40

Mr. Speaker, I also have a legal background with these workers' issues. When I worked in oil and gas, I was first surprised to hear that in this country, in this province workers have a right to refuse the work if it is unsafe to do. That's much before this Premier or this government or any of us. That was the culture. That was the work culture in this country, which I'm very proud of. I was pleasantly surprised, when I worked at Suncor, when I learned about that on the sites I was working at. So to say that workers don't have that right, as if they are the first ones to, you know, tell them that they have the right to refuse, is totally not correct.

There are so many things to complain about on these ones, but our job is to work collaboratively with them if they're willing to listen to the stakeholders. Don't listen to us, but don't insult stakeholders like the chambers of Alberta – the Calgary Chamber and all those guys – when they're telling you that there are clauses in this bill that will devastate the economy. You know, the Premier said that we should be helping workers. We'll help them if they have work to do, but if you're killing jobs, if there is no place for these Albertans to go to work, how are you helping them?

When we bring in stakeholders, we're not just saying to bring only the companies the Premier mentioned. You know, even Mr. McGowan can bring his colleagues and identify the improvements to this bill. We are all open for it. That's why we're saying: have a proper consultation.

With that, I think, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Loewen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've talked a lot here this evening about the speed at which this has been pushed through and that, you know, this government is talking about, in fact the Premier just talked about how any kind of delay is just, I guess – I don't know. I'm not sure what the problem with it is to get it right. Anyway, she doesn't seem to be too supportive of having any more consultation on this.

I just want to read from a letter dated today to the Minister of Labour from the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier just talked about how anybody who wants to delay this at all obviously doesn't care about safety and protection of the workers, but of course we just talked about how the Chambers of Commerce would like to have seen this go to committee. I'm very certain myself – and I hope the Premier would agree – that the Alberta Chambers of Commerce does not want to see their workers hurt. It doesn't want to see them suffer because of poor WCB claims.

Now, let's just read what the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association said just today. Mr. Speaker, this is an organization that obviously has a lot at stake in this, and they finally looked through this and have given it the time they could and have written a letter just today. That's how little time the organizations that would view this bill as importantly as this group – and they're just finally getting a letter to the Minister of Labour today because it's such a huge bill and there's so much concern for it and how it could impact them.

I'll just read one paragraph here.

We are concerned at the speed at which Bill 30, introduced on November 27th, 2017 is moving through the legislature and request time for a full costing analysis . . .

Now, a full costing analysis sounds like an economic impact analysis. I think we've mentioned that once or twice here today and

over the last couple of days, Mr. Speaker. They're asking for the same thing.

... to be done by the Department before the Bill proceeds to third reading.

They're asking for the department to do a full costing analysis to see how it's going to affect them and the department.

We want to work with the Government of Alberta...

That doesn't sound very adversarial to me. They want to work with the government of Alberta.

... to ensure the changes presented in Bill 30 enhance workplace safety...

That doesn't sound like they want to dither around, like the Premier is suggesting, you know, possibly make people suffer or whatever the Premier was suggesting. That sounds like they care.

... while supporting a sustainable and economical structure for the Government of Alberta...

They're concerned about a sustainable and economical structure for the government of Alberta.

... workers and employers.

Mr. Speaker, this is a group, obviously a very large group, that's got a lot at stake here with this bill, with a lot of workers involved in this. I would hope that nobody on the other side is going to get up and suggest that the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association doesn't care about safety and their workers. I would hope that they're not going to suggest that. Very clearly, the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association would like to see this full costing analysis done because they want to see sustainability. They want to see an opportunity. They don't want to see their businesses fail. They don't want to see the government fail. They want to see success. Their businesses rely on success both with the government and themselves.

We see here that these organizations, even to this day, are still giving input to the government on this legislation. I don't see how the government can sit here and claim that they have consulted fully with everybody when organizations like this are sending letters today expressing their concerns. One of the concerns is the speed at which – Bill 30 was introduced on November 27. Mr. Speaker, this bill could have been introduced on October 30. In fact, if the government felt the need to, they could have started the session earlier, and we could have been dealing with it earlier.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other individuals who wish to speak to RA1? Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I rise to speak on RA1, reasoned amendment 1, that

Bill 30... be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government has not provided Albertans enough time to be consulted on the specific changes being proposed and, further, has not provided assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. There are good things here in Bill 30 – I'll give that to the minister, for sure – but there are also some things that raise significant concerns not just for myself and my colleagues but for many from industry and for many that are on the front lines. Whether it be the construction industry or any other businesses within Alberta, they are concerned.

Part of the reason that we raise concerns is the fact that we're dealing with such a large bill, and it does take time to fully digest it and analyze it. You know, today the minister was sent a letter by the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association – I believe everybody has received a copy of that – to get the Alberta

Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association's take on Bill 30 and some of the concerns they have.

The Premier stands up and talks about the fact that the WCB review has taken over a year and a half, but at the same time Bill 30 is not just with regard to the WCB. It also includes the OH and S Act. I do believe that we need to ensure that we are doing what's right on both of these aspects. It is disappointing for me to see that Bill 30 comes forward, an omnibus bill which could have easily been split into two bills.

8:50

Yet this government has decided that they know best and that they don't need to do the transparent and accountable consultation that Albertans expect. They are willing to come forward with legislation, try to ram it through right at the end of session. That makes Albertans and that makes employers and employees suspicious of what this government's intentions are with regard to Bill 30. I believe that we would have done a lot of good if we had moved into committee with it.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. This morning I was driving to work shortly after 7 o'clock, and on the radio they were talking about I believe it was Bill 203, the Alberta Standard Time Act. They were discussing how sunrise was at 8:24 this morning and could you imagine if Bill 203 would have been passed, if the daylight savings time bill would have been passed? They said that we wouldn't have sunlight until 9:24. It's a good thing that it didn't get passed, they said. So, you know, committee work is important.

For this government to think that Albertans are happy with the process that's being proceeded with here, I think that they underestimate Albertans, and they are also doing a disservice to Albertans. At least, we could take the time to get this right, slow down Bill 30 so that the homework can be done on it, homework in a very transparent manner.

I believe that we need to ensure that Albertans have an open and transparent method of input towards legislation such as this. I'd be curious to see from the Chambers of Commerce their response and their input on what they're happy about with Bill 30 and also the things that they're concerned about with Bill 30. I would also like to hear from the Alberta Federation of Labour, Gil McGowan, get his perspective on Bill 30. But, of course, because we didn't refer it to committee, we're not afforded that opportunity.

They are doing it again, implementing changes to the Workers' Compensation Act and the OH and S Act at the same time. This large, complex bill could easily be split into separate pieces of more manageable legislation. All of these bills need the appropriate amount of scrutiny. Mr. Speaker, there are risks involved, and that's why it's important that this reasoned amendment comes forward.

You know, I was part of the hog industry, the pork industry. Over the 25 years that I was a producer of livestock, I saw it change a lot, some of it very reasonable changes, some of it a lot of red tape that was just paperwork that began to become excessive. Mr. Speaker, it does have implications because, at the end of the day, individuals are in the business to try and make a profit in order to keep their farms successful. When we started to implement more and more red tape, then many individuals – and we've seen it right across this province – decided that they were not prepared to do that any longer, and the hog industry restructured.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, we produced more hogs in this province in 1950 than we do today, on very small operations. Now, we get operations with 4,000 or 5,000 sows. Back in the day you had operations with 10, maybe 20 sows, and they were actually producing more pork at that time. You know, it's interesting to see the transition where we start to get farm-raised pork being a very hotly pursued commodity and how many people are looking for that

fresh, farm-raised hog now, very similar to the hog that was raised in the 1950s.

On some of the red tape that has come into the industry, I'll relay a story. I'm sure you'll find this amusing, Mr. Speaker. My brother-in-law was in the livestock hauling/transportation industry for over 30 years. It was to his dismay that — he was helping out a friend, a friend that had turned sick and needed a load hauled down to the plant in Red Deer. He got there, and he was not allowed to unload those hogs because he didn't have the paper to prove that he was trained to be able to unload those hogs safely. My brother-in-law had over 30 years of experience, in years previous to that, working on other cattle ranches and that type of thing, yet because he didn't have that piece of paper, he was deemed unqualified to unload livestock.

Now, in my opinion, that's red tape that's gone maybe a little bit too far. These types of things do present a risk to businesses staying in business and also to those that would like to start a new business. They look at it and they think: wow. At the end of the day, they decide that it's not worth the risk, that it's not worth the effort of trying. So then those businesses do not get off the floor. And, yes, I do believe that rules are needed, but definitely there can be overreach.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave it at that. There are many more aspects that we could reflect on in some of the responses we've had from different businesses. I do agree that the government has not provided Albertans with enough time to be consulted on these very specific changes that are being proposed in Bill 30. I do believe that it's important that Albertans have the opportunity to respond to what the government has presented, not just that we debate it in this House amongst colleagues but that we are able to receive full consultation from the people that are in the field and on the front lines in industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any questions to the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing no one, the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise this evening to speak to the reasoned amendment to Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans. Bill 30 is a timely piece of legislation. It acknowledges that some Albertans face difficult working conditions, and it strengthens their safety net. While I'm happy to support the bill, I'll also comment on some of its limitations and outline some of the bill's strengths as these are the reasons I'm not supporting the reasoned amendment.

If passed, Bill 30 would inaugurate a number of changes to the Workers' Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, pieces of legislation that haven't been amended in a decade and a half. This bill would enshrine into law many aspects of occupational health and safety that employers in the public and private sectors have already incorporated into their HR policies, including the right to refuse unsafe work, the right to remain informed about potential hazards and have access to basic health and safety information, and the right to participate in health and safety discussions and committees. Equally important, if Bill 30 should pass, survivors' benefits for spouses of workers killed on the job will be consistent, and the definition of a child or dependant will be updated to include students, reflecting the needs of many modern families in Alberta. These are positive changes that will surely benefit Albertans, and I commend my colleagues across the House for proposing them.

Two positive aspects of the bill I would like to speak about in particular are the mandated changes regarding the refusal of unsafe work as well as the extended coverage for PTSD. Unfortunately, in many work cultures it's frowned upon to refuse unsafe work where such a policy exists, and many employees don't feel safe coming forward with a work refusal. This can be attributed to a number of reasons like fear of retribution from supervisors or colleagues. However, with the law more clearly on their side, many will feel more comfortable coming forward. This is a crucial part of the bill, and the reasoned amendment would prevent this. The extended coverage for PTSD is a huge step forward, and I am very happy to see it, Mr. Speaker. I've been a vocal proponent of PTSD care in the House, and it is time that we acknowledged the trauma that many Albertans experience on the job, especially our first responders.

9:00

I do have some concerns regarding this bill. In particular, I am concerned about nonprofit organizations' costs that they could incur in establishing health and safety committees. The legislation in question seems to omit this key sector of our workforce in that it does not specify whether not-for-profits will have to take on extra expenditures related to occupational health and safety that may be too much for an organization with limited funds. The legislation mandates joint work-site health and safety committees for workplaces with 20 employees or more that are responsible for inspecting work-site hazards, helping employers respond to health and safety concerns, helping to develop health and safety policies and safe work procedures, and more. These added tasks are going to be really large additions to the workload, and I'm wondering how a nonprofit that relies on government grants or donations is going to set up and pay for committee members and liaisons to take on all of these extra responsibilities.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, Bill 30 is an excellent bill that would be beneficial to multiple Albertans. Certainly, there are issues that need to be cleared up, but on the whole it's a bill that the Alberta Party is able to support. For these reasons, I cannot support the reasoned amendment.

The Speaker: Any questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill under 29(2)(a)?

Anyone else wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move a motion to go to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Mr. Nixon: Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:03 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Loewen	Panda
Gill	Nixon	Schneider
Gotfried	Orr	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Kazim	Phillips
Babcock	Kleinstaub	Piquette
Bilous	Littlewood	Renaud

Clark	Loyola	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Luff	Sabir
Dach	Malkinson	Schmidt
Dang	Mason	Schreiner
Drever	McKitrick	Shepherd
Feehan	McPherson	Sigurdson
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Starke
Goehring	Miranda	Sweet
Hinkley	Nielsen	Turner
Horne	Notley	Westhead
Jansen	Payne	Woollard
Totals:	For – 9	Against – 42

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Speaker: We are back, I believe, to the main motion of Bill 30.

Mr. Nixon: Question.

The Speaker: There will be no one closing debate on behalf of the minister, then?

Mr. Nielsen: I'm happy to close debate, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:08 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Kazim	Phillips
Babcock	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Bilous	Littlewood	Renaud
Clark	Loyola	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Luff	Sabir
Dach	Malkinson	Schmidt
Dang	Mason	Schreiner
Drever	McKitrick	Shepherd
Feehan	McPherson	Sigurdson
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Starke
Goehring	Miranda	Sweet
Hinkley	Nielsen	Turner
Horne	Notley	Westhead
Jansen	Payne	Woollard

Against the motion:

Barnes	Loewen	Panda
Gill	Nixon	Schneider
Gotfried	Orr	van Dijken

Totals: For – 42 Against – 9

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a second time]

Bill 31

A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act

Mr. Strankman moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government did not adequately consult with veterinary professionals across Alberta, including the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment December 7: Mr. Strankman]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to . . .

The Speaker: I've been advised that you had spoken before.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 31 and to share my concerns on this bill, some of the arguments and conversation we've already heard, with respect to the rushing of some of the legislation that we're seeing in this session but also in terms of lack of consultation and stakeholder engagement.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, that once again we're seeing this government trying to legislate part of its job description, some of the things that they're supposed to be doing just as part of their day-in-and-day-out responsibilities. The minister can already draft a consumer bill of rights. It doesn't need to be an act of this Legislature, particularly when the consultation is not done adequately at this point in time.

The enforcement that we're seeing here with respect to ticket purchasing and bots: how is this being handled, and how has this been tested, and how has it been discussed with the stakeholders?

Auto repairs. I've got a letter here, actually, that I'd like to share from one of the motor dealers, Mr. Speaker, showing some deep concerns. This is actually from the executive manager of the Calgary Motor Dealers Association, who has not been adequately consulted before this legislation. He says:

Bill 31 speaks to several changes to industry, most of which are standard operating procedures for our Dealers.

Standard operating procedures already. Does that sound like something needs to be regulated or overregulated?

The changes we are most concerned with are with respect to AMVIC.

The proposed changes are unclear until of course the regulations are drawn up, but it certainly looks like Government wants to take control of the Compensation Fund (of which Dealers collected the funds for).

It also appears that changing this over to a public Board, industry will be losing our voice on the Board . . .

Voice, not control but their voice, on the board.

. . . of which we collect a majority of the funds to keep AMVIC funded.

They've funded it. They administer it. It's part of their opportunity to demonstrate their goodwill as businesses to the customers, that don't come back to them unless they treat them fairly.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Government also mentions that any changes will not cost taxpayers any additional funds. They seem to forget that Auto Dealers and all of [their] employees also pay taxes.

They're members of the community. They're philanthropists. They give back to the communities. I see many of the motor dealers and car dealerships in my community. I've got six of them in my constituency, representing those businesses well within the community. I see them at schools. I see them at community events. I see them supporting community associations.

These are just a few of our concerns regarding changes that Service Alberta is proposing.

Thanks for taking the time to read this email.

This is from Mr. Jim Gillespie, executive manager of the Calgary Motor Dealers Association. We've heard from them that they have not been consulted on this legislation, yet they are a significant part of this legislation and will be significantly impacted. But, as importantly, they've noted that some of these will impact their customers as well, Madam Speaker. That's where we're seeing again this repeated approach, which is a heavy-handed, heavy regulatory approach to things which will, actually, ultimately impact the consumer by increasing costs.

Now, there was an independent review that was completed by AMVIC with 23 recommendations that have yet to be implemented. Implementation of these recommendations should actually negate the need for any increased government control. Government controls mean government expense, mean government administration and bureaucracy to address this. Yet, again, we have not seen an economic impact study. We have not seen the costs, not only internally in the government applied to this but costs to business, costs to jobs, costs to economic activity.

Interestingly enough, the minister neglected to fill empty seats on the board of AMVIC for up to two and a half years, including seats she added after the independent review came out. This includes a time period of six months where there were no public appointees on the board at all. Even now there are two more public seats that need to be filled. So we're seeing an existing board that is not being filled, yet we now have to set up a new administration to oversee something that that minister had the opportunity to appoint more people to, to ensure the appropriate oversight of that organization.

Madam Speaker, changing AMVIC to a government agency creates uncertainty for the industry and uncertainty in terms of adequate representation on the new board of the government agency, which creates concerns about the ability to educate the public members about AMVIC's role and responsibilities. So you're going to have people who are not experts in the industry. I actually like to consult experts in the industry in everything that we do in this Legislature to ensure that we have that stakeholder engagement, not just from the public members and from the public and from the consumers but also from members of the industry who will be impacted.

9:20

We have a delicate balance right now in our economy, Madam Speaker, in that anything we do that layers on top of these businesses may affect the employment decisions that they make going forward, so again an economic impact that we have not tested nor measured.

Madam Speaker, stakeholders are concerned that this minister has historically shown a lack of understanding as far as the AMVIC compensation fund goes, and they're going to take over this fund, which is, actually, as we've heard, funded primarily by industry, yet industry is not going to have a say in that even though, from what I understand, they have been good and reasonable stewards of that fund up until this point.

Within this legislation we're also hearing a concern about the veterinary profession. I think we're going to hear more about that in the future from my colleague for Vermilion-Lloydminster, who also happens to be a veterinarian and probably can speak to some details on that. The question is: what consultation has been done there? Are there concerns that we're unaware of, and can we have those tabled to us so that we can understand why there's such concern about the veterinary profession? Or does the government

have something against veterinarians? I guess we can find that out as well in the future as we address this in more detail.

The government is taking steps to take more control and influence over self-regulating bodies. That is of serious concern to me. Madam Speaker, I think that when we work with industry, we create self-regulating organizations, and we trust that those businesses for the most part mean well in the community. They create jobs, they pay taxes, they employ people, and, yes, they need customers that believe in them and trust them and come back. That's how they do their business, through repeat customers. When we allow them to self-regulate, we put that opportunity in the hands of the experts. Yes, we have to monitor that, and, yes, they must be accountable, but in that accountability we also give them some responsibility for ensuring that their industry is one that is sustainable both economically and in terms of being able to address the needs of customers, whether that's motor dealers, whether that's veterinarians or some of the other groups that are touched by this bill.

Madam Speaker, we've seen this and we've talked in this House numerous times over the last few weeks about consultation, about stakeholder engagement, about listening to Albertans and Alberta businesses, about not rushing legislation through this House at the last minute, about not getting these sorts of documents that are stapled together, not even to the legislative printer's office on time to be properly bound for us.

What's happening here is that we're seeing a rush towards getting these things rushed through. We're hearing that it's about time and that we should rush these through and that we need to address these issues and move forward for the sake of Albertans, but what we're seeing is rushed legislation here. We're seeing that lack of consultation. We're seeing: let's hurry up and get it done. Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like us to get it done, but I'd like to ensure that we consult Albertans, that we consult the stakeholders, that we understand the economic impact of what we're going to be doing here, that we understand how it's going to affect jobs, that we understand how it's going to affect sustainability of the industries that we're touching, and, yes, of course, that we understand the positive impacts on consumers and the cost of achieving that.

It seems to me here that we're rushing this through. We're going to try and get in and out of here within a matter of a few weeks, rush this legislation through, as was mentioned by some of the previous members. We had a break in the middle. Why? We weren't ready? The government wasn't ready to bring this legislation forward, and now all of a sudden we're going to hurry this up and be ready to get out of here before Christmas? Madam Speaker, it's been mentioned by some of my colleagues. I'm prepared to stay in here until Christmas Eve if we have to, till midnight, because we need to ensure that Albertans' best interests are being met here, and I'm not getting the feeling that that's what we're actually addressing here or that is the outcome that is being sought by this government in terms of legislation we're addressing.

Madam Speaker, it concerns me deeply that the consultation and the stakeholder engagement – we've had opportunities here to send this legislation to committee. We're now trying to reason with the government here to ensure that this can be addressed in a proper way, that we have an opportunity to take a look at this legislation in a way that demonstrates, as we did earlier today, that through consultation and some collaboration and focus on developing the best legislation that we can in this House, we could actually do what we've been elected to do in this Legislature. We can work closely together in achieving that without looking at amendments to legislation and casting a negative eye on those just because they weren't authored on one side of the House or the other. Again,

we've seen that opportunity here that we can actually do that on occasion. Maybe we should do it more often.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, this concerns me. We've got several other pieces of legislation that are being rushed through. I know that I want to represent my constituents in the best way I possibly can, that we put adequate attention, consultation, stakeholder engagement on each piece of legislation that we address in this House, and I'm not sure that we're achieving that. I would like every member in this House to look inside themselves and say: "Are we achieving that? Are we doing this? Have we rushed this through with limited stakeholder engagement? Are we listening to all of the people that can be affected by this to the best of our ability?" If we can't say that to ourselves, that we've done that, then maybe we should be tapping the brakes a little bit on this to ensure that we have the opportunity to talk to our stakeholders, talk to our constituents.

We have a limited opportunity to go back to our constituencies and to talk to those people. As we're seeing, we're getting letters from various organizations, from motor dealer associations, from veterinary associations, from various other stakeholders here telling us that they have not been consulted adequately, that they're concerned about the costs, that they're going to see other costs coming, just after Christmas ironically, on January 1, increasing the carbon tax, an increase in so many other costs to them over the past year, increasing the minimum wage, all at a time when our businesses in this province are showing signs of modest recovery.

We're not seeing the robust sustainability that we'd like to see in this province in terms of many of the businesses I talk to day in and day out. I've talked to virtually every small business in my constituency, and we're hearing concerns because they're going to have increased costs. Even if their rent hasn't gone up, they're going to have increased operating costs passed on to them by their landlords, the employees that they've had for a number of years. They've had a couple of – and more to come – increases in terms of the minimum wage that they may or may not be able to absorb. I'm seeing small-business owners taking equity out of their homes, running up their credit cards, and working much longer hours themselves and sometimes hardly taking a wage themselves because there's no money left over at the end of the day or at the end of the week.

Now they're being layered with additional costs of regulation and this legislation, which is going to cost them more money in terms of administering and meeting some of these regulatory requirements that we're seeing. We saw it in the past bill and Bill 30 as well.

These are costs to business, Mr. Speaker. I urge us to choose . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek?

Anyone wishing to speak to amendment RA1? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today in order to support the reasoned amendment from my colleague in regard to Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act. I must say that when I first saw the name of this bill, I had a brief hope that the government may be seeking to regulate itself as it seems to me that the best deal for consumers and businesses in Alberta would be to remove the NDP interference from the free commerce of enterprising Albertans.

You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, my disappointment when, after reading the bill, I came to find that it seems to be yet another

measure to give the minister more powers of regulation under the cover of helping consumers. Why I say this is because on its face this bill seems to be attempting to do some good things. It targets some commercial areas where Alberta consumers often find themselves frustrated, areas like automotive sales and repair, high-cost credit, and ticket resales.

9:30

The problem is that when you look a little closer, like many bills brought forward by this government, it is riddled with problems and unsound thinking. This kind of legislation, in a way, embodies the thinking of the NDP. It rests on the assumption that businesses are out to get consumers. It implies that consumers should be treated like children rather than responsible adults, and it is emboldened by the idea that the government is the solution to all problems. The reality is that the vast majority of commerce can be left to free and voluntary exchange between individuals and businesses without the involvement of overbearing regulation from government.

Now, of course, we can recognize that there are some instances where regulation may be prudent or necessary, but even in these situations we must ensure that those regulations are thoughtful and targeted so that they are both effective and efficient in their outcomes. This kind of scrutiny of regulation is exactly the reason why my colleague's amendment is so important. Every time we apply new regulations to the way in which consumers and businesses interact, we must carefully examine the potential outcomes and ensure that we are not needlessly inhibiting economic activity or making Alberta an uncompetitive place to do business. If the government will not allow us to do that, then this bill should be set aside.

We have to remember that these kinds of regulations, which are framed by some as tools to help fight for consumers, are often as harmful to consumers as they are to businesses. Consumers and businesses by and large exist in a symbiotic relationship, where their interactions are of mutual benefit, where the pursuit of interests by one party often ends up benefiting another party. The inverse is true as well. If government comes in with heavy-handed regulation for businesses, the consumer can be harmed to an equal or worse degree. While it is certainly important to be aware of the cost that regulations impose on businesses and their profits, it is critical to recognize the impact that they have on prices and choices for the consumer.

In the context of this legislation, we should consider the effects that it might have on the areas to address. Do we want to increase the price of and decrease the availability of tickets for resale to Albertans? Do we want to increase the cost or reduce the choices that you face when fixing a car or purchasing a new one? Do we want to prevent some Albertans from accessing credit because they cannot qualify for lower rate options? How about making it more expensive to take your pet to the vet? All the above would be unintended consequences if we don't get this legislation right. Albertans expect us to have the full picture of the effects of legislation before we pass it. We cannot let a well-intentioned attempt to help consumers end up harming them instead.

This brings me to another vital consideration, ensuring a competitive and open marketplace. When discussing regulation of businesses, we must always keep in mind the proportional burden that they impose. When new regulations come into effect, it is much easier for large businesses to absorb new costs and adapt to the new rules than it is for small and medium-sized enterprises, not to mention that they provide barriers to entry for those who want to start new businesses and provide their fellow Albertans with more choices. Mr. Speaker, those are some of the unintended consequences, that some of this regulation could inhibit new

businesses from starting out, which would give Albertans more choices and more competition. Let's think about the real impacts that these regulations could have. Think about the friends who want to open up a mechanic shop together in Calgary. Think about the veterinarian who might be struggling to get by in High Level. Think about the couple who missed out on getting tickets to see their favourite band at Rogers Centre and need to buy them on the secondary market.

Serving Albertans is what we do in this place, and we need to make sure that by adding additional regulations, we are not creating excessive burdens unintentionally. To ensure that we get this legislation right, I would encourage the members of the government caucus to support my colleague's reasoned amendment and come back when they have something worthy of Albertans. Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry if this sounded a bit like an economics lecture. While my intent is to make sure that we get an opportunity to scrutinize this bill in greater detail, it occurs to me that helping the government to improve their understanding of economic principles might serve to help this and future pieces of legislation as well.

I will now try to get to some more specific areas where I think this bill could use some improvement and rethinking. If we look at the new regulations that will be placed on the sale of tickets for concerts, sporting events, and other events in Alberta, we can find a few areas of concern. This bill attempts to provide regulation to prevent the practice of using computer software to circumvent security measures in place to both prevent automated purchases and limit the number of tickets sold to a single person. Now, this seems like a reasonable proposal, trying to increase access to tickets for those who will use them rather than those who will seek to resell them in large numbers in order to make a profit.

The problem is how the government and minister believe that they will be able to enforce this. These kinds of operations are almost always outside of Alberta and often outside the reach of any legal judgment made here. The reason that they are able to make a profit is because they stay ahead of the technology designed to detect and prevent them. This kind of legislation has been passed in other jurisdictions and has proven to be unsuccessful in stopping those which it intends to. Should we really be passing legislation telling Albertans that we are taking action when evidence shows that it will not produce the outcomes that it purports to? What is the point in this kind of empty measure?

Another part of the section that addresses ticket resales mandates the refund of tickets which are purchased from a secondary seller but end up being invalid and unable to be used. This is undoubtedly a good and fair proposal. If a person buys a ticket and the product provided does not fulfill its promise, a refund is the logical solution. Why, then, does the minister reserve the power to exempt certain businesses from complying with this provision? In what circumstances would a person not be able to obtain a refund? Does this create the possibility of the government interfering in the legitimate ticket resale market and threatening the integrity of a level playing field? All questions that we need answered, Mr. Speaker. If the government has answers to these questions, they need to provide adequate explanations to Albertans. Until they are willing to do so, this legislation should not be passed.

I would also like to take this opportunity to address the section of this bill that deals with AMVIC. The bill seeks to change AMVIC from its current form into yet another arm of the government, placing even greater powers of regulation in the hands of the minister. When I look at AMVIC's role, it says here on their website

regulate the motor vehicle industry in Alberta. This responsibility is delegated to AMVIC by the provincial government. The delegation agreement gives AMVIC authority to enforce the Fair

Trading Act and regulations that apply to the automotive industry.

Mr. Speaker, their roles are very clearly spelled out on their website.

Now,

AMVIC reviews every complaint if the complaint is related to one of the following:

- A registered automotive salesperson
- One of AMVIC's licensed automotive businesses
- automotive business transactions carried-on by unlicensed dealers (curbers)

When AMVIC suspects a compliance issue related to an automotive business transaction, the complaint is referred to AMVIC's enforcement arm.

If the complaint falls outside of AMVIC's regulatory authority, consider referring to these additional resources . . .

AMVIC exercises the powers, duties and functions as delegated by the Minister of Service Alberta. These responsibilities include enforcement of matters, automotive business matters that fall under the Fair Trading Act, the Automotive Business Regulations, the Cost of Credit Disclosure Regulation and the Internet Sales Contract Regulation.

It spells out pretty clearly what AMVIC's role is. It's a delegated authority of this government.

9:40

Now, it is interesting that when the government engaged in an independent review of AMVIC meant to address many legitimate concerns, the report following specifically looked at the idea of making it a government agency. It concluded that it would not be the best solution. Mr. Speaker, that was the review that was an independent review that was already done. We've had lots of time to talk about independent reviews recently in this House. Of course, the government, on one hand, sometimes says of an independent review: well, we've got to pass that because it's an independent review. On another hand, we look at an independent review, and they say: well, no, we ain't going to do nothing that it says in that one; I mean, why would we do that? It just seems like there's a little bit of picking and choosing as far as this government when it comes to independent reviews. Now, I know that expanding government at every opportunity is standard practice for this government, but I would hope that if they are going to engage experts to do an independent review, they would at least listen to their conclusions.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring up what has perhaps been the most controversial part of this legislation, the new regulations on Alberta's veterinarian profession. I, for one, have no idea how these proposed changes ended up in this piece of legislation. Here is a profession that helps Albertans and their pets every day, often saving lives in the process. Why does this government think that consumers need protection from medical professionals? By all accounts, the number of issues and complaints associated with Alberta's veterinarians is extremely low. There doesn't seem to be any logical reason behind this proposal.

Now, I do have a letter from a veterinarian from my constituency. I'll just read a couple of parts of it.

I'm writing to express my grave concern with the recent proposed amendments to the Veterinary Profession Act contained in Bill 31 made by the Minister of Service Alberta. As a member of a self-regulated profession I take pride in upholding the high standards of veterinary medicine made possible by a professional regulatory framework developed by veterinarians and veterinary technologists that safeguards the public interest in animal health and welfare.

Then she goes on to say:

I echo the serious concerns of my colleagues in the ABVMA that proposed amendments to the Veterinary Profession Act

constitute an alarming overreach and intrusion into the veterinary profession's ability to self-regulate and were made without consultation with ABVMA.

Here we have again the government, no consultation.

I urge you to please contact the office of the Minister of Service Alberta to help get these proposed amendments withdrawn from Bill 31 as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, again we have this situation where this government fails to properly consult with the people affected.

Now, I just want to talk a little bit about the people in vehicle sales and repair. Mr. Speaker, just last week I had my car to the shop to have some repairs done to it, took it into the dealership to have the repairs done. Quite often I'll have repairs done at a local mechanic shop, not at a dealer's shop. These businesses are doing their best to provide good service to the people they serve. There's nothing wrong with that. I've bought new cars from salesmen, I've bought used cars from salesmen, and honestly I felt like I was fairly dealt with at all times. I'm sure that isn't the case with absolutely everyone, but every profession has its people that they may have problems with.

But, Mr. Speaker, a bill like this, that comes before this Legislature without proper consultation, without proper thought going into it – we tried to do the amendment to get it to committee so we could consult with the veterinarians, consult with the people in these industries that would be affected. Of course, the government voted down that opportunity to go to committee. It leaves us in the situation here now where we want to do this reasoned amendment so that we can put this off and take some time so that we can properly consult and do justice to Albertans and actually do what could help them instead of just ramming through some legislation that's kind of haphazard and not thought out properly.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to support this reasoned amendment. We need to be able to pass this and move on.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a), are there any questions or comments for the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West on the amendment.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will speak very briefly to the amendment put forward by the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. I think that there's been a lot said about this, so I want to just speak specifically to the reasoning given in the amendment, and I think we'll get very clearly what I believe we should do about this amendment.

We know that veterinarians are trusted professionals, and Albertans look to them to provide quality care for their pets and their animals. This proposed legislation will help pet owners find that high-quality care for their pets. I know that the ministry met with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association on several occasions as well as with the Alberta association of animal health technologists, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, and also met directly with several vet clinic owners. Now, Mr. Speaker, we heard their feedback and concerns. In fact, that is why we are focusing the proposals of this legislation on veterinary services for household pets.

Over the past several months we have heard from ordinary Albertans who told us that they want to be better informed when looking for veterinary services for their pets. A recent *Edmonton Journal* and Canadian Press article, that I tabled today, stated:

Davida Marantz got an unwelcome surprise when she got out of hospital in 2014 and went to pick up her beloved Sheltie Libby from friends.

The dog needed \$4,800 in dental surgery while the Edmonton senior was gone, an amount she felt obligated to pay back.

"They were so generous in taking her and caring for her and doing a really fine job that there's no way I would leave the dog with them and the bill with them," said Marantz.

She's 70 years old.

But when she checked with other clinics after paying the bill, she found that the surgery could have been done for thousands of dollars less.

That's why she applauds legislation introduced last week by the Alberta government that cracks down on the way veterinarians communicate their fees.

That's the end of the quote, Mr. Speaker.

The same article further states:

Kath Oltsher, co-founder of Zoe's Animal Rescue in Edmonton, also likes the proposed guidelines. The animal rescue takes in unwanted animals and attempts to help those with low incomes pay for the cost of veterinary care.

Oltsher said she's had positive experiences with veterinarians who provide services to the shelter. She doesn't want the profession to think that the changes are meant to be adversarial.

"It does come like we're coming after you," she said. "But I don't know how else to make a change happen."

Our proposals in Bill 31 are to require disclosure of all fees before administering any veterinary service or treatment for household pets except those fees exempted in regulation and to require customer approval prior to administering veterinary services for household pets unless exempted in the regulation; for example, Mr. Speaker, in case of emergencies. Currently ABVMA's bylaws speak to informed consent but do not define what that means or explicitly state that this includes the disclosure of fees in that process. We are simply enabling the advertising of those fees and the disclosure. It's something that veterinarians in Alberta are prevented from doing currently but is allowed in other jurisdictions.

I think that when we look at the clauses that are being brought forward in this amendment, we can see that there was consultation done; in fact, there was consultation done with thousands of Albertans. That's why I'm going to be urging all of my hon. colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote against the amendment.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Edmonton-South West? Under 29(2)(a), hon. member?

Dr. Starke: Yes, under 29(2)(a). The member mentioned the AAAHT in his address. I'm curious to know whether the member realizes that the AAAHT does not exist anymore.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

Are there any others under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Edmonton-South West?

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, as long as we're at it, I'm curious to know. The member mentioned that there was consultation with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. I find that curious because the Western College of Veterinary Medicine was not consulted when it had its funding yanked by this government back in October, but if there was a meeting with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine specifically, I'd love to know what the date of that meeting was, who attended, and what was discussed.

The Speaker: The question's response?
Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

9:50

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity. You know, I want to just recognize the importance of our veterinary community and the very important role that they play. I know that members, particularly those who represent rural ridings, have a very strong attachment to the veterinarians – it borders on an emotional experience – and I can understand why, because it's so critical to the functioning of our agriculture in this province. The large-animal veterinarians have played a very, very critical role and continue to do so. I want to just indicate that the government has the greatest degree of respect for the veterinary profession and is certainly strongly in favour of that profession being able to essentially regulate itself in the same way that other professions are able to do.

The bill, however, deals with the instances of smaller animal veterinarians, pets and so on. I know that those veterinarians also provide a very valuable service, and I know how much our pets mean to us. You can see that wherever you go, whether, you know, it's a dog lover or a cat lover or, in some cases, both – it's rare, but it does happen, Mr. Speaker – or other animals. I know, when our cat got on in age, just how important it was to have a good veterinarian so that she could live a comfortable quality of life and that her passing was peaceful. I also feel quite a bit of emotion with respect to that.

What the bill does, Mr. Speaker, is simply ensure that people are able to compare fees and compare prices. I think that as we've adopted, you know, a free-market system when it comes to veterinary care, certainly not equivalent, really, to the kind of care that our health care system offers for humans, it's important that consumers have the ability to know what the fees are for the various services and so on. I think that instances where veterinarians don't always provide the lowest cost option are rare, but I can tell you that we personally have experienced a situation where, when our veterinarian retired and sold his practice, the new veterinarian in a partnership certainly had a real practice of upselling. We switched veterinarians, and we found a very, very satisfactory one. But I think it could be avoided. That may in fact be a rare instance. But consumers have every right to know the level of fees that the different veterinarians charge for the various services that they do have. [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. Out of time.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other members? You're speaking to the reasoned amendment?

Dr. Starke: Yes. I'm speaking to the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's once again a pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 31, in this case to the reasoned amendment. I want to focus my comments this evening specifically to the wording within the amendment. I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-South West going after that specific area but was certainly disappointed that two of the references he gave in his speech he could not substantiate upon questioning. It concerns me if that sort of quotation is being made in the House, if it's stated that the AAAHT, which is an organization that no longer exists, was consulted with, if it's stated that the Western College of Veterinary Medicine was consulted with, yet we don't have dates, we don't have names, and we don't have any information. I can assure the Member for Edmonton-South West, in fact I can assure all of the members on both sides of the House that I have had more recent communication with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine than probably anybody else in the House has had, and, yes, that

includes you, Minister of Advanced Education. I've chatted with them since your meeting.

Mr. Speaker, what this amendment hinges upon, really, is the word "consultation." That is a word that, my goodness, gets tossed around here a lot. The concern that I have is that it seems that the word means different things to different people. So I went back to sort of the days when I was in high school debating. In every high school debate, when you had a debate, you had a resolution. Then the first thing you did: the first affirmative speaker had to define the terms. I said: you know, that would be a good idea; let's see if we can at least settle on what consultation means.

I did some checking in some different dictionaries. There are a number of them, but there is not that much variation. Basically, consultation means, according to the *Cambridge Dictionary* of English, for example, "the act of exchanging information and opinions about something in order to reach a better understanding of it or to make a decision, or a meeting for this purpose." I said: okay; that seems reasonable. In fact, the example that they used was: "We hope to work in consultation with Congress on how the law should be interpreted." Sort of makes sense.

The second definition, also from the *Cambridge English dictionary*: "the process of discussing something with someone in order to get their advice or opinion about it." I said: well, that certainly makes sense; consultation seeks opinion from the other person. Certainly, consultation implies a two-way exchange of information: somebody seeking information, somebody providing that information, and then going back and forth. I think that it's fair to say that you cannot reasonably call something a consultation if there is only a one-way flow of information. A consultation involves an exchange. A consultation is two-way. It's interesting that the example for the second definition that I gave was this: "The policy change was presented to us as a fait accompli, without consultation or discussion." Does that sound familiar?

I think that it does sound very familiar because, in fact, in talking to many, many stakeholder groups – and the veterinary profession is only the latest of those stakeholder groups – this government has fallen into a trap of dictation rather than consultation. I've talked to many stakeholder groups where they say that representatives from the minister's office brought them into a room, sat them down, told them what was coming, turned on their heels, and left the room. There was no opportunity for questions; there was no opportunity for exchange. That would happen once, usually shortly before the introduction of a bill. Not always. Not always. But I have heard of that pattern of behaviour time and time and time again from this government.

Now, that concerns me, and it should concern you folks because that does not engender trust. That, in fact, endangers trust. That does not engender a good working relationship. When we specifically talk about Bill 31 and the consultation during the course of debate on second reading, on the motion for referral, there's an exchange between myself and the Minister of Service Alberta. The Minister of Service Alberta said the following. This is in *Hansard* on page 2266.

I just want to touch again on the veterinary piece of this legislation. We consulted. We had two in-person meetings with the association. We had an additional phone call with the association. I'm told that this is, in fact, more consultation than what was done when there was the amalgamation of the technologists and the vets. You know, there was good and substantial consultation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a basic problem when you make a statement like that. Veterinarians keep very good records. It's part of what we do. We record stuff. To give you an idea of the comparison of the consultation on Bill 13 and Bill 31, that we're

discussing right now, there is the sum total of the documentation on the consultation on Bill 31. Most of this I've tabled already. Now, I'll be tabling this. This is one copy of the consultation documentation on Bill 13. One copy.

10:00

The consultation on Bill 13, in fact, extended back to even before this government took office. I know that because when it was first considered to bring technologists into the veterinary profession, guess who was consulted by the then minister of jobs, training, and labour? Myself. I was consulted as to whether that would be a good idea, and I told the minister: "Yes. Absolutely, it would be a good idea. The veterinary profession certainly supports it. Animal health technologists are trusted professionals that work shoulder to shoulder with us, and we would very much like to see them as equal partners within our association." So, yes, there was consultation back then.

You know, I will say – and I said this before – that the hon. Minister of Labour, who became minister in January 2016, four months later was able to pass Bill 13. In those four months she had 12 separate instances of communication with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. Twelve separate instances of communication: e-mails, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and the exchange of no fewer than four draft copies of the proposed legislation. Four were exchanged back and forth between the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and the minister's staff. That exchange and that work together engendered a sense of trust. The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association trusted the Minister of Labour and understood the rationale behind what was going on with that legislation. As a result, for those of you who recall, the debate on Bill 13 was rather uneventful. Pretty much everybody agreed on it because it was good legislation. It was legislation that had passed the test of consultation, a two-way discussion, a two-way dialogue that occurred.

Now, I'm sorry that the minister, it appears, has been given bad information, but when the minister is given information that says that the consultation on Bill 31 was, in fact, more robust and more complete than the consultation on Bill 13, it simply isn't true. You know, I find it interesting because the minister in her opening remarks on Tuesday afternoon said that there had been misinformation. In her very first paragraph in *Hansard* – this is on page 2265 – she said:

There seems to be a lot of misinformation being communicated throughout the House as well as outside of this House, so I would like to take another opportunity, in addition to the comments that I made upon introduction of second reading, to provide further clarification.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess my question is: where is the misinformation coming from, and who is disseminating it? You know, a number of my colleagues have now received the same form letter response from the minister with regard to this bill. That form letter response has in and of itself within it five major inaccuracies – five – and it's a short letter. It's interesting because members of this Legislature, private members and members of cabinet, in the government caucus have been using that exact same letter over their signature to reply to constituents. A form letter, and it's easily recognizable because the form letter contains the same five errors.

Mr. Speaker, this has done nothing to improve the level of trust between the Alberta veterinary community, including veterinarians and registered veterinary technologists, and this government. I'm also seeing that in the copies of letters I'm getting from many former supporters of this government, people who formerly voted for the NDP, people who had intended on voting for the NDP. But they won't be making that mistake again. This piece of legislation,

in fact, is changing votes, at least in my profession. Now, this government may well have made a calculation: there are only 3,000 of them, and we can afford to lose that many votes; you know, that's all worth while. We may well be the sacrificial lambs on their altar of what? What exactly are they trying to accomplish?

Now, the Member for Edmonton-South West repeated once again the situation of the senior with regard to her dog. You know, I certainly feel for her. Clearly, it was a difficult situation that she was in. But I will also tell you that if somebody asked me to review a dentistry bill of \$4,800, I would never offer a competing price quote without knowing exactly what was done on that animal and what was involved. If those other price quotes were given without that information, well, then that's part of the problem. That's part of the issue with the whole situation of price transparency, which the Government House Leader talked about. We're not talking about sacks of potatoes here, Minister. We're not talking about: this is the same as this, is the same as this. Every patient is unique, every single one, and to post a singular price that is supposed to be a one-size-fits-all – medicine doesn't work that way. Medicine doesn't work that way.

Mr. Speaker, this is the problem that we have with regard to consultation, and this government has completely broken the trust. They're acting with the input from whom? We were told: with the input of the AAAHT. Well, the association doesn't exist anymore. Input from WCVM: whom did they talk to? They said: several veterinary clinics. I'd love to know who. I'd love to know who in the veterinary community is saying that they actually disagree with the ABVMA on this.

You know, he gave two anecdotes regarding fees that seem to be unreasonable. Well, Mr. Speaker, I took statistics in university, and one thing I learned is that the plural of anecdote is not data. You collect together some scattered anecdotes, and you figure that you've got a strong case. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

Now, if there was an issue with that bill or any other bill, we have a very well-established disciplinary and ethics procedure within our profession, as do all other self-regulated professions. I've talked in this House before about how that works. I've also talked about how that is not a very busy part of our association. But if this government feels that there is something rotten in the veterinary profession – and clearly they do because otherwise they wouldn't be bringing this forward – if they think there's something so flawed within our current self-regulatory body, then I encourage them to open a dialogue with the Veterinary Medical Association and not what they're doing right now, and that is completely ignoring all requests for dialogue. The Minister of Service Alberta has never met once with the association or with its president.

The Minister of Labour, to whom we are actually responsible, came to the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association annual general meeting and spoke to that body. That's how you engender trust. You don't do it by doing this and undercutting a group of professionals that has self-governed successfully for over 111 years. I find it absolutely baffling that this government, under the guise of consumer protection, can reverse 111 years of successful self-governance and basically decide that they know better for the veterinary profession than the group of professionals that are actually involved in it. It is sad, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again, I'm going back to a letter that we received from the Minister of Service Alberta on November 3 in which she said that no legislative changes would be contemplated without consultation and engagement with the veterinary association. The next time we heard from the minister was the day before introduction of the legislation, at which time she was not willing to share. It wasn't her; it was one of her . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, under 29(2)(a)? Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the knowledge and the awareness of the actual facts of the reality that the member has been presenting. I'd love to hear him continue with what he was going to say. I have one question for him. As a veterinarian how does he feel about being lumped in with unscrupulous ticket resale scammers, supposedly honest automobile crooks, and high-cost credit groups who are sharking people? How does he feel as a veterinarian being lumped in with that group in one bill?

Thank you.

10:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I mean, what I can tell you is that what maybe doesn't matter so much is how I feel because somehow my feelings don't matter according to the minister. It's bad to say anything negative about being grouped in. But I think what is important is how my colleagues feel, how the 3,200-plus members of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association feel about being placed in a bill that is specifically intended to deal with scammers.

That word, "scammers," was used by the minister in her introductory remarks to this. Because this bill deals not with the fringes of veterinary medicine – you didn't decide to go after the people who practise veterinary medicine without a licence, the unscrupulous people who provide what are veterinary services by definition but have never studied veterinary medicine, are not licensed, and if something goes wrong, the owner of the animal has no recourse to the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. You didn't go after those folks. Those are the scammers.

But no. Instead, you decided to go after the core of our profession. The very core of the veterinary profession is the target that you have decided to take with this legislation, and I wonder: who's next? Should the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud be concerned because the medical profession is next? Should the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake be concerned because the accountants are next in the crosshairs of this government?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to once again quote. This is quoting from the letter that our association president received on the 3rd of November, some two and a half months after she asked the minister for clarification as to why this bill was coming forward.

Based on the consultation results, should the Government of Alberta determine this is an area of focus, further consultation and engagement with industry stakeholders would be necessary to develop the details of any potential legislative or regulatory amendments.

As responsibility for the Veterinary Profession Act falls under the Ministry of Labour, I would refer to my colleague, the Honourable . . .

And it gives the minister's name.

. . . Minister of Labour, for her consideration.

Mr. Speaker, none of that happened. None of that happened in the space of time from November 3, when this letter was received, to December 4, when, I believe, the bill was introduced. Actually, it was introduced before then. It was introduced on November 29. There was zero consultation with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. There were not two in-person meetings and one phone call. There was one in-person meeting and two phone calls. I know that because that's what our medical records say, and I trust those medical records. We've already shown that some of the information that's been given to the Minister of Service Alberta is incorrect, so

it comes down to who I and who my colleagues trust as far as providing accurate information.

This reasoned motion, Mr. Speaker, provides and states that this bill should not be read a second time because veterinarians across our province haven't been consulted. I think it is pretty clear that that hasn't happened because you've all been receiving letters from my colleagues right across this province, from one end to the other.

The second reason is because the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association was not adequately consulted, and I can tell you that it was not. It was a massive departure from our experience with Bill 13, and that's why it is so disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of this reasoned amendment. I know the word "consultation" gets tossed around here a lot, but I can tell you that consultation is a two-way dialogue in which both parties feel they were equal participants. In this case that test has failed. This was not a consultation, and this amendment should pass accordingly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on the reasoned amendment.

Mr. Clark: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I will rise and speak briefly to this amendment because there is absolutely no way I could outdo my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster and his expertise in this area. I do rise to speak in favour of the reasoned amendment on this, specifically because the focus of this reasoned amendment is on the veterinary profession, and I think that it doesn't have any place within this bill. I think, as my hon. colleague very eloquently laid out, it is comparing the veterinary profession, which is governed under its own legislation, with people who would seek to scam others, be they unscrupulous ticket resellers or high-cost credit providers or perhaps some unscrupulous auto dealers, which, I would suggest, is the minority of that group as well. Regardless, it doesn't fit. I think that given that, we need to send this back to the drawing board on this particular issue specifically.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

There are aspects of this bill that I like. I certainly think that it is important that we protect consumers from the things we listed earlier, whatever we can do to protect Albertans from unscrupulous ticket resellers. I'm certainly curious as to how the government feels they will be able to successfully achieve that where so many others have failed, but I admire their attempt to make an effort there. I have some sympathy for those who are targeted by high-cost credit providers, and certainly I enthusiastically supported this government's changes to payday lending. I think this bill offers some similar opportunities there.

I have at least one constituent that I know about that was scammed by Treadz Auto. If this bill can in fact fix that situation specifically or prevent future situations like that, I'm certainly very enthusiastic and supportive of that.

But adding in the veterinary profession and lumping them in with those different groups doesn't make any sense. It's very clear from the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster's previous comments that the veterinary profession was not adequately consulted.

The question I'll ask the government on this is the question I asked them so many times: please quantify the problem that you're trying to solve. Provide us with real, actual, tangible data, not just one or two letters from people who had a bad experience. I want to acknowledge that that bad experience, I'm sure, was a very real situation for them and not to be diminished. But does the Legislative Assembly of Alberta need, in fact, to step in and deal with what I

think are very rare exceptions when there are many other mechanisms that already exist to allow people to address unscrupulous – if there is a concern or a billing issue or a question that comes up in the provision of veterinary services, there are already mechanisms dealing with that. So it just simply doesn't fit, Madam Speaker, with the rest of this bill.

For that reason, I stand in support of the amendment. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was brought to my attention by table officers that when I moved my motion earlier today, I may not have been clear in my intent, which was to move to one-minute bells for the entire night. So, in the interests of clarity, I would like to move that motion again.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always an honour to rise in this House and speak. I rise today to speak to this reasoned amendment for Bill 31, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, to go to committee. Once again with this NDP government bill we get a mixed bag of goodies, a mixed bag of unconnected legislative changes. It's too ripe for unintended consequences.

It certainly has some good points such as attempting to gain some kind of control over those who use ticket bots to unfairly escalate prices, although in typical NDP fashion it sounds better than it is because the new laws are unenforceable. More regulations for door-to-door sales or high-credit lenders can also be positive in this bill, but this bill prompts too many questions for it to continue through this House.

Let's start with the consumer bill of rights. What exactly does it do? This was a campaign promise of this NDP government, and I guess Albertans can decide if it fulfills anything other than taking up space on paper. The bill of rights reminds me of Bill 1. We all remember the jobs bill. As my hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays always reminded the minister, that bill created one job. The consumer bill of rights also does nothing. Calling something an act doesn't make it an act, but the NDP have become awfully good at playing that game and claiming that all those policies are going to change Albertans' lives and make life better for Albertans. [interjection] I expect that Albertans see through it, actually. Government House Leader, they see through it, sir.

10:20

Let's move on to a substantial part of the bill and pose some serious questions. An immediate red flag that we have questions about is the inclusion of veterinarians in this bill, like our colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster spoke about in depth. I don't think I can go into that depth, by any stretch of the imagination, on this topic.

I note that during the consultation the NDP had indicated an interest in addressing talent agencies and moving companies, a plethora of other entrepreneurial-type businesses. I'm not suggesting that they needed to include them in this legislation, but it seems strange that they dropped these kinds of businesses yet included veterinarians, who are governed by their own professional association. If my memory is still okay at this time, I think the

Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster said that the association was, like, 111 years old. The NDP government wants to reach and strike at the self-governance by allowing cabinet to make regulations.

I remember last week on this thing we talked about that horses don't have gallbladders. That was interesting to know. We learned that. Today we learned that the AAAHT doesn't exist anymore.

An Hon. Member: It changed its name.

Mr. Gill: Well, I mean, like, if you're reading it so passionately, at least do your homework when you're reading.

It makes no sense: a group of people with no knowledge about a professional association that has done a good job for over a hundred years governing itself and cabinet is going to interfere with that. I just don't understand the rationale behind it. The question is: why? We haven't heard an answer, but we have heard that the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association was not consulted. That's what we know.

We tried to send this bill to committee to allow a fulsome consultation. Again, we just got a definition of consultation. I think it would serve a good purpose to all the stakeholders, to all Albertans to have consultation. There's only one common-sense path now because sending this bill to consultation, to a committee, which this NDP government doesn't want to do – Madam Speaker, the only other way to do it is to just vote this down as soon as possible. Veterinarians are justifiably upset over changes they didn't expect, and we have no idea who is asking for those changes. Let's end this now.

Madam Speaker, this government is also proposing to turn AMVIC into an agency. AMVIC, as we all know, has been a topic of interest for some time now. An independent review made 23 recommendations about AMVIC's fate. Not one of them – not even one of them – said: turn it into an ABC. We look forward to hearing from the Minister of Service Alberta about why she has chosen this route, but we have heard no explanation like the other consultation, the other legislation. No explanation.

Once again, Bill 31 could have gone to committee for a fulsome review, but, no, that's not what this government believes in. No explanation. Greater costs and oversight. We don't know why and we'll likely never know why they're making AMVIC an agency. What do we do? Bringing AMVIC under the umbrella of the ABC creates an unnecessary instability for the industry. That is a completely different route than what the independent review recommended, with no reason.

Auto repair is another dicey area for government to involve itself in. It tried once before with Bill 203, if we all remember, and had to step back from that mess of legislation. Now they're at it again. As far as we know, the NDP has not consulted with the industry. Again, is that a surprise? Certainly not to this side of the House. It's wrong because every time the government members talk, they claim that, you know: we're making life better for Albertans. So let's include Albertans in consultation.

Automotive shops are small businesses. They're in every community in Alberta, so let's include them. They have had a hard enough time surviving with this NDP's other bad policies. They don't need more unnecessary burdens. You never know what the breaking point is in their businesses. It has happened to too many businesses already in this province, so let's call a time out. Let's put a halt to unnecessary legislation and focus on the issue that matters to Albertans.

Madam Speaker, we can start today by voting for this reasoned amendment. I hope the members from the government side will also support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

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

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:28 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Loewen	Schneider
Clark	Nixon	Starke
Gill	Orr	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	

10:30

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Kleinsteuber	Piquette
Babcock	Littlewood	Renaud
Bilous	Luff	Rosendahl
Carson	Malkinson	Sabir
Coolahan	Mason	Schmidt
Dach	McKitrick	Schreiner
Dang	McPherson	Shepherd
Feehan	Miranda	Sigurdson
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Turner
Horne	Notley	Westhead
Jansen	Payne	Woollard
Kazim	Phillips	

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading?

Are there any members wishing to close debate?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:33 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Jansen	Phillips
Babcock	Kazim	Piquette
Bilous	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Carson	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Clark	Luff	Sabir
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schmidt
Dach	Mason	Schreiner
Dang	McKitrick	Shepherd
Drever	McPherson	Sigurdson
Feehan	Miranda	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Westhead
Hinkley	Notley	Woollard
Horne	Payne	

Against the motion:

Barnes	Nixon	Schneider
Gill	Orr	Starke
Gotfried	Panda	van Dijken
Loewen		

Totals:	For – 38	Against – 10
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[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank all members for their co-operation in having a very effective and efficient deliberation this evening on two very important pieces of legislation. I will move that we adjourn the House until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:38 p.m.]

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