



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 30, 2019

Day 6

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
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Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)
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Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)
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Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),
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Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
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Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Neudorf
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Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Sigurdson, L.
Sigurdson, R.J.
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant

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Smith
Turton
Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 30, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, the prayer. O Lord and giver of good, we thank You for the opportunities that we have before us today. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

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

Bill 1

An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

The Deputy Chair: Currently we are dealing with amendment A2. Are there any comments or questions with regard to this? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to of course offer my comments on this amendment going forward, but first of all, I would like to invite all of my colleagues here in the Legislature, you know, if you're not paying attention to the debate here this morning, to take a walk out onto the balcony here outside the Chamber and breathe deeply. Tell me how pleasant that feels to inhale all of that smoke into your lungs, and then imagine that this becomes normal, every year, forever. Not only will it become the new normal for Alberta at this time of year, but we will have air quality like this from the end of February until the beginning of December if climate models are correct, and of course we know that they probably won't be correct because the history of climate models indicates that they always underestimate the impacts of climate change.

Of course, if some of you are a little bit tired this morning because it was really hot last night and you couldn't sleep in the heat, imagine that we are going to have at least two months every year here in Edmonton of days like that, more in Calgary and southern Alberta. So I hope that the members opposite really get used to, you know, sleeping at night at 31 degrees Celsius.

My heart goes out to the people of Wabasca and Bigstone, who had to evacuate their homes last night, and I wish them a speedy return. But like I've said many times in debate on this bill, Mr. Chair, it's not enough to just offer our thoughts and prayers to the people who are affected by climate change induced wildfires; it's incumbent upon us to actually take action to prevent these things from happening.

I hope, you know, the members who represent those areas – I'm thinking of the Member for Peace River, the Member for Lesser Slave Lake, the members from Fort McMurray – are willing to go back to their constituencies this weekend and look their constituents in the eye and say: "We had the opportunity to develop a meaningful plan of action to tackle climate change, to tackle the climate crisis, and we didn't take it. I'm sorry, people of those constituencies, but you'd better be on standing evacuation notice from now until forever because we refuse to take action on climate change."

Now, to get to the crux of this amendment, Mr. Chair, what this amendment proposes – and I'm sure that my colleague from Edmonton-North West got into this in great detail last night – is that the money that was already collected as part of the carbon levy should be spent on climate change initiatives.

Now, of course, we admit that the carbon tax is not an incredibly popular piece of policy. In fact, in my own constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar I heard some complaints as well about the carbon tax, but what they didn't complain about were the programs that the carbon tax revenue funded. Certainly, people were irritated at having to pay the carbon tax but were not irritated when Energy Efficiency Alberta showed up to replace their light bulbs and shower heads and thermostats. They certainly weren't irritated when they got generous rebates on energy-efficient appliances. They were quite happy when their homes were audited for energy efficiency and they were offered rebates to upgrade the insulations in their attics, walls, and basements. Mr. Chair, of course, in my constituency the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar are eagerly awaiting the completion of the construction of the southeast LRT line, money that comes from the carbon levy funds.

Of course, it's not just my constituency. I mean, Edmonton-Gold Bar is a pretty special place, but it's not unique in that all Albertans have been wildly in favour of all of these climate change initiatives. That's why they've been oversubscribed as soon as they've been rolled out.

We think that it's only fair that if the people of Alberta have been asked to pay the carbon tax, they actually get what they paid for and that we keep the money that was collected from the carbon tax to be used for the purposes it was intended. At least let those programs run their course. Of course, we know that the Member for Calgary-Acadia is a fan of letting things run out in due course. We think that the whole government should let the climate change programs that we initiated run their due course as well, with the remaining money that is left in the carbon tax fund.

Mr. Chair, I hope that all of my colleagues see fit to actually uphold the promise that they made to the people of Alberta that the carbon tax money would be spent on climate change initiatives and vote in favour of this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

It looks like I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View looking to speak to amendment A2.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think it's worth while taking a moment to note this amendment. What the change is attempting to do is to keep in place the brackets around the way in which funds coming in can be used. Those were put in place originally to ensure that while we were working on the demand side with respect to pollution, we were also ensuring that we were assisting individuals, those individuals who were low income and were not able to afford the transition as easily, that we were providing programs, that we were providing adaptation programs for folks who might have a harder time adapting.

9:10

As I think has been mentioned in this House, many First Nations unfortunately still run on diesel fuel for power generation, which is a very carbon-intensive manner of generating power. Some folks, simply due to their circumstances, require a little bit more in order to adapt. There are some schools, some in my riding, that are quite old and might need additional help in order to adapt.

The reason for those rules around how the funds could be spent is to ensure that Albertans could have confidence, confidence that the plan was, in fact, about ensuring that as we moved forward, we

were adapting to a lower carbon future, not immediately but at some point in the future. You know, as we over here and, I'm sure, the members over there are rapidly discovering, large systems don't turn quickly or easily. Knowing what the future holds, I think it's incumbent upon us to begin to adapt as soon as we can. I think this amendment is designed to help to ensure that what funds are coming in – we know that as soon as Alberta's plan is repealed, we'll move to the plan from Ottawa. This would ensure that what money comes in still goes to those good works and goes to moving this province forward.

I think this is an excellent amendment. I'm certainly in favour of moving forward with it. I think, again, you know, as we stand in this place, future generations are watching us and will be looking to us to say: when you had the opportunity, what did you do? I think this is brought forward in a spirit of ensuring that even though we are going in the direction we're going, even though we're getting rid of the Alberta plan, even though we're moving to the federal plan, we're doing our best to ensure that we're still helping the people of Alberta as much as we can, and we're still doing our part to make progress.

With that, I will close.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Heday looking to speak.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't want to belabour this point too much. I just want to make sure that my name and voice are on the record in support of this amendment. I remember, not that long ago, when the members of the government were on this side, and they were saying: how are you going to promise us that this funding is going to go where it's supposed to go? Here we are today, and they're doing exactly what they argued that we shouldn't do. I think that they should consider supporting this amendment. I think that the money that has been funding these programs, money from our taxpayers, the people of this province, should go towards what they were promised it would go towards.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Like my fellow colleague from Edmonton-West Heday, I'd just like to also put my name and my voice on the record in support of this amendment, primarily because when I was speaking to the constituents in my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud, the issue that they cared about most when we were talking about the economy – we on this side also care very much about the economy – was diversification, because they wanted to see our province be able to move forward in a way that isn't completely reliant on one source, one industry, because we've become so vulnerable to its fluctuations.

Diversification was a big issue that we talked about, and they very much appreciated that at least one of the uses of the carbon levy, other than rebates, was to actually invest in new energy sources and new industries that would actually diversify our economy. Again I go back to the comments from my colleagues about how important it is that we use the money that was collected under the carbon tax to continue to invest in diversification and in new energy sources because we do need to look at the future and look at the long term for this province's economy and stop relying solely on one industry that's going to continue to be subject to international influences and things that are out of our control. We should take control of our destiny and our economic future, and that was part of the benefits of the climate leadership plan, the diversification of and the use of the carbon tax resources.

I stand in support of this amendment and encourage everybody to consider that we should continue to invest those in diversification of our economy, as intended. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview rising to speak.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. You know, I join my colleagues in support of this amendment. I mean, yesterday when I spoke, I talked extensively about many projects in my constituency that benefited from the energy efficiency monies. I think it'd be very tragic if these projects couldn't go ahead.

Actually, just yesterday I received a letter from one of my constituents in support of this, and I wanted to share that with the House. It says:

I support strong energy efficiency programs in Alberta. Your support to keep energy efficiency a priority in our province is an opportunity for Albertans to save money off every utility bill and find jobs in emerging sectors. All while reducing our province's emissions . . .

. . . Alberta has an energy efficiency program that has returned \$3 to Albertans for every \$1 invested. Continuing an energy efficiency program is an investment into our communities, businesses and province that makes sense.

More than 3,600 jobs have been created in the energy efficiency sector since 2017.

Of course, that was under our government's mandate, the NDP government.

Across the country, it is expected that this sector will continue to grow by 8.3%. Let's keep this momentum by supporting energy efficiency in Alberta.

Energy efficiency saves me money at home. And more significantly, retrofits can reduce energy bills upwards of 50% for Alberta's businesses and communities.

I want Alberta to have an innovative and strong energy efficiency program. Keep energy efficiency a priority for Alberta.

Sincerely,
raine turner

I received that yesterday from Raine Turner. They're a constituent of mine. I just am, really, here to represent my constituents. I've heard loud and clearly from them that it's very important for this to go ahead. So, again, I stand in support of the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, rise on behalf of constituents who are complaining loud and clearly to me that the monies generated by the carbon levy are not going to be used to benefit them and programs that they wish to apply for to save money and reinsulate their homes or upgrade their windows or change their furnace. Many programs existed under this carbon levy fund to benefit constituents, like those who are complaining to me that now this shell game is going to be moving that money into general revenue and therefore their benefits will be lost. My constituents are complaining loud and clear to me that this money should be staying in the fund and be used for the purposes for which it was raised.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just rising briefly to urge the Assembly to accept this motion. I can tell you that at the lengthy

debates when we introduced our climate leadership plan, including the price on carbon, the opposition, the then Wildrose opposition and the PC opposition, were greatly concerned that revenues from the price on carbon would go into general revenues. In fact, the former Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat talked about a slush fund over and over again despite the fact that we clarified that every dollar was getting reinvested back into the economy.

Now what we're seeing in this bill is that leftovers from the price on carbon are actually going into general revenues. They are actually going into a slush fund that the government can decide to use for whatever it wants as opposed to retrofits or investing in renewables or programs to support renewables. So I find it, you know, pretty interesting that now the shoe is on the other foot: "Well, no, that's not a slush fund. That's okay." But three years ago it wasn't when they were sitting on this side. Funny how quickly things change when a party gets into government.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat and urge all members to vote in favour of this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members looking to speak to amendment A2?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any members who wish to speak to Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar standing.

9:20

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, it's very interesting, as my colleague and friend from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said, how quickly the members of the UCP caucus have gone from opposing a slush fund to voting in favour of it. Of course, my constituents will be very disappointed to learn that the carbon tax dollars that they begrudgingly paid are now going to fund corporate tax giveaways. So rather than getting solar panels, light bulbs, energy-efficient appliances, insulation, and an LRT, they're going to get CEO bonuses and stock buybacks and see absolutely no benefit from the carbon tax levy that they paid into.

That's fine. You know, Mr. Chair, I think what we've seen already in – what day is this? – day 6 of the Legislature is an incredible rush to disappoint the people of Alberta. Already, on day 6, the people of Alberta have been significantly let down by the members across the way. I can only expect that it will get worse from here.

However, saying that, I know that many of my colleagues here in this House believe in redemption, so I come forward with an amendment in the spirit of redemption, Mr. Chair, that the hon. members should feel free to take. I would like to table another amendment to this bill, and I have the appropriate number of copies.

The Deputy Chair: I'm just going to take a minute here to distribute the amendment. This amendment going forward will be A3.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, do you have comments with regard to your amendment A3?

Mr. Schmidt: Amendment A3? It's in order? All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move an amendment that Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, be amended as follows. Section 1 is amended by striking out "immediately at the beginning of the day on May 30, 2019" and substituting "immediately at the beginning of the day on which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada)." Section 2(3) is amended (a) by striking out "immediately at the beginning of the

day on May 30, 2019" and substituting "immediately at the beginning of the day on which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada)", and (b) by striking out "on or before June 29, 2019" and substituting "on or before the date prescribed by the Minister." Section 3(2) is struck out and the following is substituted:

(2) Section 35.2 is repealed and the following is substituted:
Application of Division

35.2(1) This Division applies to payments deemed under section 35.3(3) to have been paid in a specified month in 2017 and subsequent years up to and including the year in which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada).

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations specifying months in which no payment shall be deemed under section 35.3(3) to have been paid, provided that those months occur following the month in which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada).

Section 6(1) is amended by striking out "on May 30, 2019" and substituting "on the day on which Alberta becomes a listed province as defined in section 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (Canada)."

Now, Mr. Chair, what this bill does is that it reduces the red tape that this government is subjecting everybody who has to pay the federal carbon tax to. It was with – how should I describe it? – perverse delight, I guess, that I read the contents of Bill 4, the so-called Red Tape Reduction Act, introduced yesterday, and of course if anybody took the time to read the contents of the act, all it did was generate more red tape for the government bureaucracy, which is interesting.

You know, we have a government that is using quite Orwellian language in its legislation and its press releases. It says that it's repealing the carbon tax; it's actually implementing the federal carbon tax. It says that it's opening Alberta for business; it's actually picking workers' pockets. It says that it's creating jobs by offering corporate tax cuts, and when asked, the minister can't actually say how many jobs it's going to create or when. Then we have a Red Tape Reduction Act that actually increases the amount of red tape that the government bureaucracy has to deal with. That's why I say that, you know, the people of Alberta are being vastly disappointed by the members opposite with the first four pieces of legislation that the members opposite have brought forward.

Now, Mr. Chair, what this amendment does is that it actually reduces red tape. We all know that the federal carbon tax is going to be imposed. That's the choice that the members opposite have made for the people of Alberta. We strongly disagree with that choice, but they seem intent on ramming the federal carbon tax down the throats of the people of Alberta. So all we're trying to do with this amendment is to make that transition easier, so rather than, you know, Albertans having to shift their systems twice, they only have to shift their systems once. I think it makes sense.

Everybody in this Chamber, at least, says that they want the economy to operate smoothly, that they want businesses to be able to conduct their work free from red tape and overregulation, so this just eases that transition that the government is choosing to force on our businesses here in this province, makes it easier, reduces the red tape. I challenge the members opposite: if they're genuinely interested, if they're genuinely committed to reducing red tape, then vote in favour of this amendment and actually take a significant measure to reduce the red tape that they say they want to lessen on the economy of Alberta.

I look forward to all of my colleagues voting in favour of this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members looking to speak to amendment A3?

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving back to Bill 1, are there any members who wish to speak to Bill 1?

Seeing no one, are you ready for the question on Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax?

[The clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

9:30

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Chair, I move that we rise and report the bill.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, say no. So ordered. Carried.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to colleagues for this opportunity to speak to third reading of An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. Our party has been working since the day of its creation for this moment, this opportunity to remove this huge dead-weight cost that punishes hard-working people for living ordinary lives in this province.

But let me begin by tracing the history of this damaging tax imposed by the previous NDP government. First of all, Mr. Speaker, we can cast our minds back to the 2015 general election, in which the NDP published its platform, that did not utter a single word or even hint at a carbon tax or whatever euphemism they choose to use: a carbon price, a carbon levy. There was no allusion to it at all. In fact, in the annex of the NDP platform they delineated 12 tax policy changes, not a single one referring to the carbon tax. Without imputing any motive to members of the Assembly, of

course, this was a huge act of political deception foisted on Alberta voters by a party that knew perfectly well its intention to impose a carbon tax but hid that intention from voters. Yet within weeks of becoming government, they appointed a commission which ultimately gave the NDP the recommendation it was looking for to impose a carbon tax on Albertans without democratic consent.

It is no wonder that since that day four years ago over two-thirds of Albertans, in every single public opinion poll taken on the issue, have demonstrated consistent opposition to the tax on living their normal lives imposed by the NDP by the carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, at least what we are doing today is restoring a sense of respect for democracy in this province. Unlike the NDP, which foisted a carbon tax on Albertans without having been transparent with them in the last election, this was one of our central commitments. That is why it is Bill 1. This is not only part of our job-creation strategy to renew Alberta's economy; this is also, in part, a renewal of the spirit of democracy in Alberta politics here today.

Let me point out that the NDP callously imposed this tax on people for the crime of heating their homes and filling up their gas tanks to go to work in the midst of the worst economic downturn in this province since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Mr. Speaker, when people are losing their jobs, their businesses, their homes, when their incomes are declining, when in desperation many people left the province, how callous do you have to be to make that bad situation of economic adversity even worse?

You know, one of the things I find, frankly, so distasteful is the constant tendency of the NDP and their ideological fellow-travellers to refer to themselves as "progressives." Mr. Speaker, what is progressive about telling a widow on a fixed income that she has to pay more to heat her home? What is compassionate about the Leader of the Opposition, the then Premier, saying that if you don't like it, then perhaps you should take the bus or walk to work? What understanding is there in that comment of the challenges that ordinary people face? The NDP in its callousness is not understanding that for the vast majority of Albertans walking to work is not an option, that there is in many cases if not most really no bus to take.

What about the working people, that the NDP ridiculously claims historically to represent, the working people who need to take their pickup to work with their tools and their equipment? There's no bus that they can take. There's no change of life they can make in this real world to avoid paying a carbon tax. So all it does is punish those people for doing what they ought to do, which is to work hard and take care of their families, punishing moms and dads for driving their kids to hockey practice, punishing seniors for heating their homes. What this government said is that it would become more expensive to do what you've got to do simply to survive in this cold northern economy. Callous and regressive, not progressive, Mr. Speaker.

You know, let me, then, speak to the basic purported concept of so-called carbon pricing. Now, theoretically, for example, I'm sure that Professor Leach at the University of Alberta, who in part designed this carbon tax, which will be repealed today or very shortly, and others would say, and I'll try to be objective and fair in representing their general view, that a carbon tax is more efficient than regulation and that carbon taxes can be an efficient form of environmental policy to reduce CO₂ emissions if they are revenue neutral – that is to say, if they displace other taxes, if other taxes are reduced proportionate to the carbon tax increase – secondly, if they displace other regulations so that it's a substitute for regulations in the theoretical carbon tax model; thirdly, if they are progressive with very generous rebates; and fourthly, if they are of general application globally or at least amongst competing economies.

9:40

Let me walk through each of those four principles. Mr. Speaker, none of them apply to the NDP carbon tax. I say to those who are theoretical supporters of some conceptual, perfect, utopian carbon tax that that is not what we are debating in this House today. That is not what the NDP imposed on us four years ago. To the contrary, it was 100 per cent new revenue. It was, frankly, nothing but a tax grab, a political tax grab. There was not one cent in offsetting tax reductions. To the contrary. In the midst of an historic recession, while tens of thousands of people were losing their jobs, what did the NDP do? They raised taxes on everything, not just on heating homes and filling up gas tanks but also on job creators and on incomes and on property, on the provincial portion of property taxes, and they conspired with their ally, Mr. Trudeau, to raise payroll taxes on Albertans, making it even more expensive for job creators to hire people.

The theory is that you're supposed to reduce taxes to offset the revenue gain from a carbon tax. This socialist crowd did exactly the opposite, Mr. Speaker. They raised taxes while imposing the carbon tax cumulatively, all of this increasing the tax burden on the productive sector of our economy in a way that deepened and prolonged the longest recession since the Great Depression. On principle 1 of the carbon tax, this was a complete failure.

Principle 2, replacing offsetting regulations. Well, Mr. Speaker, did the government reduce a single regulation to effectively replace, quote, costly regs with a carbon tax? No. To the contrary. They increased regs week after week, month after month, specifically regs ostensibly to deal with greenhouse gas emissions. They supported similar new regulatory burdens imposed by their allies in the federal Liberal government. All they did was to add to the regulatory dead-weight burden on the Alberta economy with a tax that is notionally supposed to replace the regulatory burden. So on principle 2 of an ideal carbon tax, what we are debating today, the NDP's tax, was a complete failure.

Thirdly, these taxes are supposed to be notionally progressive, and the NDP will talk ad nauseam about rebates, but, Mr. Speaker, only 40 per cent of the revenues generated from the carbon tax went back in rebates, and those rebates only went to a select number of individuals in about 60 per cent of Alberta households. Now, while we oppose the federal carbon tax, by contrast, 90 per cent of the revenues generated by the federal carbon tax go back in rebates to 100 per cent of households and, based on today's announcement, to small businesses as well. There was no rebate, by the way, for the small businesses impacted by the NDP carbon tax, who will as a result of this bill save an estimated \$4,500 per year on average. There was no rebate for the nonprofits and charities who had to struggle to pay the carbon tax bill, no rebates for the school boards that had to pay more simply to run their school buses.

Mr. Speaker, I'll give you a couple of concrete examples of that kind of regressivity. I visited the West Country seniors' centre in my friend the hon. Government House Leader's constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It's a wonderful spot, Mr. Speaker. I recommend that members go and visit it to see, really, the volunteer spirit in Alberta generally, particularly rural Alberta. This is a wonderful little spot, run one hundred per cent by volunteer labour, where the community gathers to keep seniors active. They go and play cards and shuffleboard, and they have exercise activities. I think we were there for a darts tournament. It's just a wonderful spot.

Now, the West Country seniors' centre, Mr. Speaker – I met with the executive board. They operate that place – get this – on a budget of \$18,000 for the entire year. For the entire year. Now, they bring

in a few thousand dollars in offsetting revenues from hall rentals, but, you know, otherwise they're paying for it with a \$20 membership fee and the odd little donation here and there.

The NDP comes along, slaps on the carbon tax that they hid from voters in the last election, and suddenly heating costs went up, and then they went up again. They were having to pay I think it was upwards of \$2,000 in carbon tax to heat Sundre's seniors' centre. They called the Premier's office to say: "Is there any help for us to cover the burden which you've imposed? We may have to close the place down." I mean, my hon. colleague can verify that they looked at possibly having to close the seniors' centre down. They called the Premier's office, the now Leader of the Opposition, and the staff there said: we suggest you raise your membership fees. Seniors, Mr. Speaker, on fixed incomes being told that they had to pay more so that the NDP could scoop more revenue from them. Is that progressive? Is that compassionate?

What about the Calgary board of education? My colleague from Chestermere-Strathmore could correct me, but I believe that they were paying over a \$1 million a year to pay carbon tax to operate their fleet of school buses, and they had to cut routes and reduce access to school busing for students. If I'm not mistaken, a lot of that happened in my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services' constituency, and many parents are upset to this day as a result of the loss of bus service, and many of those are new Canadian families, and some of them are low-income new Canadian families, whose kids now struggle to get to alternative schools in part because of this carbon tax. How is that progressive, Mr. Speaker, to tell low-income new Canadian families, "Sorry; you can't get your kid to an alternative program so they can get a great start in life because we need to scoop that revenue because we believe in punishing people," for what is nothing more than empty virtue signalling? I'll get to that in a moment.

Oh, by the way, here's the whopper on progressivity. The NDP claimed that there would be these generous rebates, Mr. Speaker, but then in last year's budget the then Finance minister revealed, not transparently in the documents but only under questioning from the media – he was forced to tell the truth and to admit that as the carbon tax went up and up and up, there would be no increase in the so-called low-income rebates. Let me just paint the picture here. They started their carbon tax at 20 bucks a tonne, and then they raised it by 50 per cent the next year to \$30 a tonne, and then their plan – and their entire fiscal plan was predicated on this – was to raise that to the next increment, \$40 and then \$50 a tonne.

Of course, they weren't going to stop there because as the then environment minister and the Premier both admitted, they would continue to, quote, increase the stringency of the climate leadership levy in co-ordination with the federal government. Now, Mr. Speaker, one rule of thumb I have in politics is that if you have to use an entire string of euphemisms to disguise what you're actually doing, it's probably because it's not good for Albertans.

9:50

Increase the stringency of the climate leadership levy: let me translate that into plain English, Mr. Speaker. That meant increasing the tax on Albertans. That was their plan, to go from \$20 to \$30 – they got us there – then to go to \$50, and then to go higher and higher and higher. In fact, they wanted to tie themselves to their allies the Trudeau Liberals, whose environment ministry has admitted through documents obtained through access to information that they intend ultimately to raise the carbon tax to \$300 a tonne.

That really shouldn't be a surprise, Mr. Speaker, because all of the hard-core carbon tax advocates admit that for it to have a sufficient impact on people's behaviour – let me translate that. For

it to force people to turn the heat down enough in the winter and to give up driving to work, for it to force people to do that sufficiently, to significantly reduce CO₂ emissions, it requires a price – and I'm now paraphrasing Professor Leach, the principal author of this tax – of at least \$200 a tonne. So that's where they're headed.

In fact, our colleagues opposite frequently cite the UN international panel on climate change, which published a paper last year, Mr. Speaker, which called for a carbon tax of between \$500 a tonne and \$5,000 a tonne. Five thousand dollars a tonne. As I've always said, this is all about the frog in the pot. It's always been an incremental tax grab. They benignly start at \$20, and for most people it probably wasn't a huge irritant. Then they'd raise to \$30. Then it was going to go to \$50. Then the federal government says to \$90, then eventually to \$300, and then according to the UN experts it should go up to \$5,000, making it effectively impossible to live normal lives in this northern, cold climate. That is where they were headed.

Mr. Speaker, here's the point. As the price was to go up from \$30 to \$50 and beyond \$50, no increase in the rebates. Progressivity: what did this mean? This means that the poorest Albertans – the people living on AISH with no earned income, for example, people living on social assistance, seniors living on GIS – would have zero relief from the government as they had to pay more for the crime of heating their homes and nothing for the embedded increase in the cost of buying groceries. You know what the carbon tax does? It makes the cost of transporting things more expensive. When you go to the grocery store, everything has been transported, a lot of it from great distances, so the price of everything goes up as a result.

Let's be clear. The NDP, who call themselves progressives, if they vote against this bill, Mr. Speaker, what they are telling low-income Albertans is that they want to return to the NDP plan of taking money out of the scarce budgets of people on the very lowest levels of income, and I think that is shameful and one of the reasons that we need to pass the carbon tax repeal act.

On the fourth principle, then, Mr. Speaker, of the conceptual idea of a carbon tax. It has to be effective. It must be of general application. What does that mean? Well, what it means is that the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which I acknowledge is important, is a global challenge. It is not a challenge that is limited to the borders of Alberta. In fact, we could shut down Alberta's economy tomorrow – heaven knows the NDP certainly tried – and that would reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by about two-tenths of a per cent, by .2 per cent. So 99.8 per cent of global emissions would continue and in most countries continue to rise. In fact, the incremental growth in CO₂ emissions from the People's Republic of China alone next year would completely consume the elimination of the Alberta economy in terms of its impact on global emissions. Why do I paint this kind of absurd example? It's in order for us to understand that it doesn't matter how much pain we impose on Albertans. If the rest of the world is not doing its part, it will not matter one whit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the flight of tens of billions of dollars of investment capital from Alberta, which is one of the reasons we've seen the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. Much of that capital has moved from Alberta's energy sector to the energy sector in other jurisdictions, very often to other jurisdictions with lower environmental standards, and in every instance that capital has moved from Alberta with the carbon tax to energy producers without a carbon tax. In fact, of the world's 10 largest oil and gas producers, Alberta is the only one to have imposed a carbon tax on itself.

The United States has doubled oil production in the past decade, much of it, I will add, under former President Obama's tenure, the same President who talked a lot about greenhouse gas emissions

and blocked the Keystone XL pipeline. That President oversaw a doubling of oil production. No carbon tax.

Russia, the world's largest current contemporary producer of oil, with radically lower environmental standards than Canada: no carbon tax. Venezuela, with the largest recoverable reserves on earth, run by a brutal socialist dictatorship: no carbon tax. I guess they didn't get the memo from Socialist International that they're supposed to impose a carbon tax. Saudi Arabia, Mr. Speaker, I think has the second-largest reserves on earth: no carbon tax. Qatar, the Islamic Republic of Iran, et al.: no carbon taxes. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the industrialized world is going in the opposite direction for reasons I will explain in a few moments. The industrialized world is moving away, not towards but away, from carbon taxes.

Well, let's look at Canada, for example. In Ontario they had a facsimile of a carbon tax, called the cap and trade system, which was repudiated by Ontario voters in their election last year and has been repealed as a result. In New Brunswick they elected a government on the commitment to oppose the carbon tax. In Saskatchewan the government was re-elected on the commitment to oppose a carbon tax. In Manitoba the provincial government there had intended to co-operate with the federal government until they learned that it was Ottawa's way or the highway, that there was going to be no compromise, that Ottawa insisted on a \$30 and then \$50 and then \$90 carbon tax. So Premier Pallister pulled out: no carbon tax.

Let's look down south, Washington State, which is arguably the most liberal, certainly one of the most liberal, states in the United States, has voted now not once but twice in the past three years in referenda to oppose the imposition of carbon taxes.

Our friends in Australia, which in many ways is perhaps the most similar liberal democracy to Canada: the sister party of the NDP there, the Labor Party of Australia – they are both members of Socialist International – seven years ago imposed a carbon tax. But then voters said, "This is ridiculous. This is hurting our livelihoods, our economy, and it's doing nothing for the environment," so voters elected a small "c" conservative, large "l" liberal government that immediately repealed the Aussie carbon tax. Now, here's a very interesting footnote. That Australian Conservative government was re-elected last week on its pledge to continue opposing job-killing policies of the Labor Party. In the same election the Labor Party, the sister party of the NDP in Australia, said it would never again impose a carbon tax on Australia. Even the sister parties in Socialist International are fleeing from the idea of carbon taxes because they know that it's all economic pain and no environmental gain, Mr. Speaker.

10:00

The only folks to not get the memo are in this House. They're the only ones, Mr. Speaker. In France they had intended to impose a carbon tax under a socialist government, another sister party in Socialist International. Guess what? The socialist government of former President François Hollande said at the last minute: no, we're not going to proceed with this.

The massive protests in the streets of France in the past several months threatening the stability of their government: do you know what the central issue motivating those protests is? It's the ridiculously high taxes on energy, that already exist in France, that are creating energy poverty for middle-class people. These are protests led, by and large, by middle-class, suburban people in France, who are saying: we can't afford to run our small businesses, to drive to work anymore. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the industrialized world is moving in the opposite direction.

Here's the point. If at least peer jurisdictions with whom we compete economically are not imposing a tax like this on themselves, then what's the point? All we end up doing is creating what economists call carbon leakage, which really means capital leakage or jobs leakage. It means that if we make it more expensive to produce and consume energy and our competing jurisdictions don't, then that energy consumption will, according to the basic laws of economics, simply move to other jurisdictions, and that's exactly what has happened.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Just simply take a flight down to Houston and go to the west Permian and you will see the biggest boom in energy production in American history and in North American history. Drive across the Saskatchewan border to North Dakota and see what's happening in the Bakken reserve, and you will see this huge explosion.

When you look out and you see those drilling rigs and those service rigs, Mr. Speaker, if you look closely, you'll see that a lot of them are from Canada. A lot of them are from Alberta. This has been a massive shift of labour, of money, of equipment, and of jobs. If you don't believe me, just take a drive 20 minutes south of here. Go to Ritchie Bros. in Leduc, the constituency of my friend from Leduc-Beaumont, and you will see at any given time thousands of pieces of equipment being auctioned off. They have had to auction off billions of dollars worth of equipment in the past four years, much of it, if not most of it, being purchased by American companies at fire-sale prices. You know what? Very often that equipment initially belonged, before it went into receivership or bankruptcy, to small Alberta enterprises, gals and guys who rolled their life savings into starting that small oil field service company, that small drilling company.

I see the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. His community has been devastated by companies exactly like that, one after another after another, being bankrupted. I remember that I visited one in July of 2016. They had gone from 400 employees to 200 employees. I went back to visit them in July of 2018. The company didn't exist anymore. That's the story of Drayton Valley. That's the story of much of Alberta in the last four years.

Here's the point. All of that equipment that moved south, that's sitting at the Ritchie Bros. yard, it's moving to produce energy in jurisdictions that do not have a carbon tax. So what is the point? Mr. Speaker, if we really compel the NDP to be honest about this – oh, I guess I'll add a fifth obvious principle of a carbon tax. It's supposed to reduce emissions. It's supposed to reduce emissions. Well, Mr. Speaker, how's that working out? It's fascinating.

Last December CBC was doing a year-end interview with the then Premier, and they asked her: by how much are you reducing emissions with the carbon tax? And she said: I'm sorry; I'll have to get back to you; I wasn't briefed on that. I wasn't briefed on that? I wasn't briefed on that. On the centrepiece policy of the entire NDP government: didn't have an answer.

I'll tell you why she didn't have an answer. It's because the answer is that there is zero measurable reduction in Alberta greenhouse gas emissions as a result of the NDP's retail carbon tax.

In fact, a professor at Simon Fraser University, an economist – somebody can look this up for me. Mark Jaccard is his name. Professor Jaccard wrote an op-ed in the *Globe and Mail* last December. He is a strong advocate of carbon taxes, I think the pure and ideal form that I'm trying to describe. Professor Jaccard essentially said in this op-ed that at most – at most – the NDP carbon tax in Alberta would be responsible for 5 per cent of the total emissions reductions projected to happen in this province as a result of all the other measures like, primarily, shutting down coal plants.

Even their academic fans on carbon taxes have admitted that at most the carbon tax had a negligible effect, basically an immeasurable effect on greenhouse gas emissions. Yet these guys prance around claiming that this is going to save the global environment. It's going to save the world, Mr. Speaker, making widows pay more to heat their homes while the rest of the developed world is turning away from carbon pricing and the developing world is massively increasing emissions. It is a total charade.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me then turn my attention to the impact that this has had on Alberta. This is a quote from Professor Jaccard, December 14, 2018, *Globe and Mail*, headline: Divisive Carbon Taxes Are Much Ado about Nothing. He goes on to say:

Pollsters say Alberta Premier's... carbon tax contributes significantly to her dim re-election prospects.

Well, that turns out to have been prophetic.

Ironically, my research team finds the new tax [in Alberta] will cause only as much as 5 per cent of her climate plan's projected reductions. The heavy lifting is from... coal plant phaseout, methane regulations, a preexisting flex-reg on large industries and a cap on oil sands emissions. I'll bet she wishes an economist had told her she didn't need the tax, and that it does almost nothing anyway.

Now, just to be clear, this is not some supporter of my party. This is a fellow who is a carbon tax advocate, Mr. Speaker, who says – let me say that again – that the NDP carbon tax, which we are repealing today, “does almost nothing.” The NDP tax is increasingly regressive, not progressive, not revenue neutral but instead a tax grab, not a general application because the rest of the world is not doing it and, in fact, going in the opposite direction, and not reducing emissions. Again I ask: so what is the point? The best answer I can come up with is this. It makes them feel better about themselves. It makes them feel virtuous. It makes the NDP feel like they are somehow saving the planet by punishing people for living normal lives.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but the charade ends in this place today as we speak with clarity on behalf of the vast majority of Albertans who have said from day one that they oppose this punishing tax. Today we will liberate Albertans from that tax with the adoption of this bill, our central election commitment. Promise made, promise kept. The carbon tax repealed.

10:10

With this bill, Mr. Speaker, a family that has two cars will save up to \$1,800 over the next four years alone, and that's not accounting for how high they would have raised it. Scrapping the carbon tax will reduce the tax burden on Albertans by \$1.4 billion. As best we can tell, this represents the single largest tax cut in Alberta fiscal history, right here today, and 70 per cent of Alberta's middle-income families will be saving up to \$1,150 as a result of repealing the carbon tax.

It is estimated by Stokes Economics, a highly regarded independent econometric firm, that the repeal of the carbon tax will result in the creation of at least 6,000 new, full-time, private-sector jobs. Let me give you some detail on that: 1,400 new jobs in manufacturing, 1,200 new jobs in the trades, nearly 1,000 new jobs in transportation and warehousing. Stokes Economics estimates that this repeal will increase our economy, our gross domestic product by \$1.3 billion, that it will save the average small business \$4,500, that it will help charities, some of whom estimate that they pay more than \$35,000 per year in carbon taxes under the NDP, charities like the Calgary Food Bank, who will be able to hire a new employee as a result of the savings from this carbon tax. This will allow the Sundre seniors centre to keep their doors open. This will hopefully allow the Calgary board of education to bring back the

bus services that it had to reduce. Mr. Speaker, I hope it'll allow my condo's strata board to decrease the condo fees they told me they raised in order to pay for the carbon tax. Maybe that's a conflict of interest.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me add that another alleged rationale for the NDP carbon tax was that it was going to acquire for us something called social licence. Do you remember that one? Social licence. Basically, through the magic of punishing people for heating their homes, what it was going to do is turn David Suzuki and Elizabeth May and the B.C. New Democrats and everybody else from pipeline opponents to pipeline proponents, that somehow by showing them just how virtuous the NDP in Alberta was, we were going to get social licence and public support, political approval for the construction of pipelines to get a fair price for our energy products.

Well, how did that turn out, Mr. Speaker? I've challenged the NDP in this House in the past. Now, I'll extend this challenge yet once more. Please identify for me a single political actor, political party, municipal government, provincial government, environmental organization, First Nation leader, academic, prominent commentator, media commentator; please identify a single one that moved from opposition to pipelines in general and the Trans Mountain pipeline in particular to support for those pipelines as a result of the NDP carbon tax. I've been asking that question for three years, and I haven't been able to get an answer from any of the carbon tax advocates – and I'll tell you why – because not one single person, entity, government, party, or interest group moved from no to yes on pipelines as a result of the NDP carbon tax. On that criteria alone it was a complete and catastrophic failure.

Mr. Speaker, you know what? I know the NDP – they sure did this in the campaign. They love calling people all kinds of derogatory names. They love the politics of fear and smear. So when we say that we think the carbon tax is hurting our economy and not helping our environment, they stand up and they use phrases like “deniers.” You know historically where that phrase comes from. Let's face it. It's rhetoric designed to impose, frankly, moral opprobrium on those targeted by it. Outrageous language. I don't and this government does not deny climate science, that there is change in the global climate, that there are anthropogenic as well as natural causes, that we need to reduce carbon emissions. It's a moral and environmental imperative.

That is why we will be bringing forward this autumn our tier fund, which will be a levy on major emitters, continuing the tradition where Alberta was the first jurisdiction in North America, one of the first in the developed world to address major industrial emissions through such a fund. This fund will produce revenues that will be directed to funding research and scientific developments to help reduce carbon output, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which technology and which innovations we can then share with the developing world, where they have this huge challenge.

Let me speak to that for a moment, Mr. Speaker. We Albertans, we Canadians sometimes become, I think, a bit complacent. We have a tendency, perhaps, sometimes to take for granted just how high our standard of living is, but there are billions of people around the world, roughly half the world's population, that still do not have access to reliable energy. Hundreds of millions of people who have to cook their dinner on a small propane stove or with wood fire. My friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs grew up in such a village in Nigeria, where people can't go and flick a switch and be sure that the power will be there, and knows what it means to live in energy poverty. My friend from Edmonton-South West understands the radical difference that abundant and affordable energy makes to realizing human potential and raising up the standards of living of people.

One of the great achievements of postwar history has been the massive increase in global living standards and the huge reductions in absolute levels of poverty. One of the primary reasons for that has been access to affordable energy, but there are still too many people around the world who do not have that which we take for granted. I understand why the governments of China and India and Nigeria and all through the developing world are seeking to offer affordable energy to their people: to help lift them out of poverty. Unfortunately, in many cases, that means energy production with high carbon intensity.

It is not morally correct for those of us in the northern countries, in the prosperous west to tell the developing world that they cannot offer energy to their people. To the contrary, it is incumbent upon us to help them find ways to produce that energy with a shrinking environmental and greenhouse gas emission footprint. That's in the real world, Mr. Speaker, not in some abstract utopian world. In the real world that is the challenge.

My friend the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions was born and raised in China, where they have been bringing on stream every year dozens of additional coal-fired power plants. They do it because of the massive growth in the population and the energy demands. They want to move away from coal production, and the single best way we could help them to do so, as Canadians, the single most practical thing we could do to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions would be, Mr. Speaker, to get our clean Alberta natural gas to China through LNG exports. That's what we need to focus on, not punishing widows for heating their homes when it's 30 below in Edmonton, but getting our liquefied natural gas to China, to India.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the first time I met my friend the recently re-elected Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, was in 2008 in Ahmadabad, Gujarat, when he was the chief minister of that state. I'll never forget. Then Chief Minister Modi-ji said to me: “Minister, what can we in India do? In Gujarat what can we do to get access to your natural gas?” He said, “I'm spending billions on new LNG port facilities so we can off-load LNG from around the world.” Prime Minister Modi is a huge opponent of terrorism and extremism. He said to me: “Minister, I don't want to have to buy natural gas from the countries that are funding terrorism that is killing my citizens. I want to buy natural gas from the country that we admire most, Canada. Help us get that natural gas so we can move from coal to a radically lower emissions profile with liquefied natural gas.”

10:20

This was a plea to me from the now Prime Minister of India 11 years ago, Mr. Speaker, but we're not one inch closer to getting India or China that natural gas. These are the things on which – so yes, we do agree on one thing with the NDP, that there is an urgency. There is an imperative to take concrete action to reduce CO₂ and greenhouse gas emissions, but again, punishing people for driving their kids to soccer is not the way to do it.

Ultimately, the solutions for this huge challenge will be found through constant technological innovation, and that is why the centrepiece of our government's climate strategy, which will be released in the fall, is the tier levy on major emitters. It will affect about 60 per cent of the emissions from the Alberta economy, the emissions that come from heavy industry, that quite frankly is much better positioned to pay than ordinary Albertans.

Secondly, that revenue will go into funding pure and applied research that can help us to reduce emissions here and around the world. We estimate that that tier fund and that tier levy will reduce emissions by approximately 40 to 45 megatonnes. That's a significant contribution, Mr. Speaker. To the national target, to the

Paris climate targets: it doesn't get us all the way there. We acknowledge that other measures will have to be taken, but we can take practical measures that do not punish ordinary people.

Mr. Speaker, let me then turn my attention to the threat of the imposition of a federal carbon tax because one of the specious claims of the NDP is that the passage of this bill will simply invite the federal government to impose a tax on us. No, we do not invite the federal government to impose a carbon tax on Alberta. Should they seek to do so, we will oppose it at every measure, immediately filing an application for a judicial reference on the constitutionality of that federal intrusion into our jurisdiction at the Alberta Court of Appeal. Simultaneously, I've instructed the hon. Minister of Justice to assist the government of Saskatchewan by seeking intervenor status in supporting their appeal of the recent Saskatchewan appeal court reference on the federal carbon tax to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I'm further proud to say that because the NDP government of Alberta would not defend our taxpayers, my party, the United Conservative Party, stepped up to the plate and we defended Alberta taxpayers by seeking and obtaining intervenor status at the appeal courts of Saskatchewan and Ontario on their respective judicial references on the constitutionality of the federal carbon tax. We'll monitor the forthcoming decision in Ontario, and we will continue to support our friends in the government of Manitoba. I'm pleased to note that my friend Premier Higgs in New Brunswick is indicating the likelihood that he, too, will be launching a legal challenge of the federal carbon tax.

I am proud, Mr. Speaker, to have worked over the past two years on a growing national coalition of provincial governments, of provinces, that are standing up for and defending Canadian taxpayers. While the NDP sold us down the river to their ally in Ottawa, we stood up for and with this bill continue to stand up for the economic interests of Albertans. We make no apology for that.

Now, let me say that while we will vigorously oppose the federal carbon tax every step of the way for all of the reasons I've already articulated, I want to point out that as bad as it is, the federal carbon tax is not as bad as the one we in this Legislature will repeal today. Why do I say that? Well, first of all, the federal carbon tax this year is at a \$20 tax level whereas the NDP carbon tax that we're repealing is at a \$30 level, so right away people will pay less should the federal government impose on us. Secondly, as I already pointed out, the federal rebates are much, much more generous than the provincial rebates. Only 40 per cent of the NDP carbon tax went back into rebates, and that only to people in 60 per cent of households whereas 90 per cent of the federal carbon tax revenues go back in rebates to 100 per cent of households. From just a pure cash perspective people will be, frankly, better off than they were under the NDP carbon tax.

At least the federal government is recognizing the imputed cost on small businesses, but by not nearly as much as they should. On this I heartily agree with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's critique of the federal policy announced today on small business, but the NDP carbon tax had zero relief for small business or charities and nonprofits where the federal one does. Now, this is not an argument for the federal carbon tax, but I'm simply pointing out to my friends in the NDP that it is not really a replacement. It is less damaging. It's still damaging, but it's less damaging to Albertans' pocketbooks than the one imposed by the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, with all of that said, I want Albertans to know that we hope that – let me back up and say that whether this bill is adopted today or next week, I can assure Albertans that based on the announcement we have made, this bill will be effective tomorrow . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Today.

Mr. Kenney: . . . today, May 30. I should know that date. Today, May 30, 2019, is the end of the NDP carbon tax. In fact, I look forward this afternoon to visiting a gas station in southwest Edmonton to observe as they actually switch the price down, saving Edmontonians money when they fill up at the gas tank.

Mr. Speaker, we have barely been in office for a month, and we are already today delivering to Albertans the biggest tax break in our province's history. I say to my colleagues that they should be proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Albertans for their patience as we got to this day, and I can assure them that the fight for our economy, for jobs, and for common sense is not over; that this government will take serious action to address the real challenge of greenhouse gas emissions, working with our partners across Canada and, hopefully, with jurisdictions all around the world. But at the same time this government will not punish Albertans for living normal lives. For that reason, I urge all members to vote at third reading for Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act.

Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely pleased to rise today and move third reading of Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier. I would also ask that you as well table a copy of the article that you referenced in your speech, at the appropriate time.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. government House whip.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to of course rise and adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

10:30

Government Motions

Amendments to Standing Orders

11. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective December 4, 2018, be amended as follows:

1. Standing Order 3 is amended

(a) in suborder (1) by striking out "Subject to suborder (1.1)" and substituting "Subject to suborder (1.1) and (1.2).";

(b) by adding the following after suborder (1.1):
(1.2) The Assembly shall not meet in the morning from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, or 9:00 a.m. to noon on Wednesday or Thursday, if the Government House Leader, or a member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader's behalf, notifies the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting, notice having been given no later than the time of adjournment on the sitting day preceding the day on which the morning sitting will be cancelled.

(c) by adding the following after suborder (5):
(5.1) In the period prior to, or following the commencement of, the first session of a Legislature, the Government House Leader may file a revised calendar with the Clerk, notwithstanding the deadline in suborder (5), following consultation with the Opposition House Leaders.

- (d) in suborder (6) by adding “or (5.1)” after “unless varied by the calendar provided for under suborder (5)”;
- (e) by striking out suborder (7) and substituting the following:
(7) As soon as possible after January 15 each year, and following receipt of a calendar submitted under suborder (5.1), the Clerk shall publish the calendar provided for under suborder (5) or (5.1).
2. Standing Order 7 is amended
- (a) in suborder (1) by striking out “Introduction of Guests” and substituting “Introduction of School Groups”;
- (b) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:
(3) When Introduction of School Groups is called, brief introductions may be made by the Speaker of groups of schoolchildren in the galleries.
- (c) by adding the following after suborder (5):
(5.1) If any Member other than the mover rises to speak to a debatable motion to concur in a report of a committee on a Bill under Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees, debate on that motion shall be called under Orders of the Day
- (a) when the Government thinks fit, in the case of a report on a Government Bill,
- (b) on the next sitting day other than a Monday, in the case of a report on a private Bill, or
- (c) on Monday afternoon under Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills other than Government Bills, in the case of a report on a public Bill other than a Government Bill.
3. Standing Order 8 is amended
- (a) by striking out suborder (1) and substituting the following:
8(1) On Monday afternoon, after the daily routine, the order of business for consideration of the Assembly shall be as follows:
Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills
Written Questions
Motions for Return
Public Bills and Orders other than Government Bills and Orders
At 5 p.m.: Motions other than Government Motions
(1.1) Notwithstanding suborder (1), if on a Monday afternoon prior to 5 p.m. no items of business other than Motions other than Government Motions remain on the Order Paper for consideration by the Assembly, Motions other than Government Motions shall be called and after the Assembly has decided all questions necessary to conclude debate on the motion, the Assembly shall proceed to consideration of any items of Government business provided for in suborder (2) unless unanimous consent is given to proceed to an additional Motion other than a Government Motion.
- (b) by adding the following after suborder (7)(a):
(a.1) Debate on a motion to concur in a report of a committee on a public Bill other than a Government Bill will conclude after 55 minutes of debate on the motion and 5 minutes for the mover to close debate, unless the motion is voted on sooner.
4. Standing Order 13 is amended by adding the following after suborder (5):
(5.1) No Member shall disrupt the orderly conduct of the proceedings of the Assembly by loudly or repeatedly banging on a desk.
5. Standing Order 19(1) is amended
- (a) in clause (a) and (b) by striking out “at 5:15 p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings” and substituting “the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting”, and
- (b) in clause (c) by striking out “at 5:15 p.m., unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion” and substituting “unless the debate is previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings 15 minutes prior to the time of adjournment for the afternoon sitting and immediately put every question necessary to dispose of the motion”.
6. Standing Order 29(3) is amended by striking out “and motions for returns” and substituting “, motions for returns and motions for concurrence in committee reports on public Bills other than Government Bills”.
7. The following is added after Standing Order 31:
Confidence of the Assembly in the Government
31.1 The confidence of the Assembly in the Government may be raised by means of a vote on
- (a) a motion explicitly worded to declare that the Assembly has, or has not, confidence in the Government,
- (b) a motion by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, “That the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the Government”,
- (c) a motion for the passage of an Appropriation Bill as defined in Standing Order 64,
- (d) a motion for an address in reply to the Lieutenant Governor’s speech, or
- (e) any other motion that the Government has expressly declared a question of confidence.
8. Standing Order 32 is struck out and the following is substituted:
Division
32(1) A division may be called for by 3 Members rising.
(2) When a division is called, the division bells shall be sounded at the beginning and for the last minute of a 15-minute interval.
(3) After the first division is called during any meeting of the Committee of the Whole or Committee

- of Supply, the interval between division bells on all subsequent divisions during that meeting shall be reduced to one minute, except in the case of the first division called during an evening sitting that commences in Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 4(4).
- (4) When Members have been called in for a division, there shall be no further debate.
- (5) Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote.
- (6) The Clerk shall record the ayes and the noes and announce to the Speaker the number of votes cast for and against the motion.
- (7) The ayes and noes shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
- (8) Abstentions shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings.
9. Standing Order 37 is amended
- (a) by striking out suborders (1) and (2) and substituting the following:
- (1) Five copies, and any additional copies required by suborder (2), must be tabled of a document presented by a Member to the Assembly for
- (a) placement of one copy in the records of the Assembly, and
- (b) distribution of
- (i) 2 copies to the Legislature Library,
- (ii) one copy to *Hansard*,
- (iii) one copy to the Government, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, the Official Opposition, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member, and
- (iv) one copy to the Official Opposition, in the case of a document tabled by the Speaker, a Member of the Government caucus, any other party or group in opposition or an independent Member.
- (2) In addition to the copies required under suborder (1), one additional copy must be tabled of
- (a) responses to written questions and returns ordered by the Assembly for distribution to the Member who asked the question or moved the motion for return, and
- (b) any document presented by a Member who is neither a Member of the Government caucus nor the Official Opposition, to allow for distribution to both the Government and the Official Opposition under suborder (1).
- (b) by striking out suborder (3).
10. The following is added after Standing Order 46:
- Debate interrupted by adjournment of the Assembly**
- 46.1 When a motion to adjourn the Assembly is carried or the Assembly is adjourned for want of quorum, the matter under consideration prior to the adjournment shall be deemed to be adjourned to a future sitting day.
11. Standing Order 52(1)(c) is struck out and the following is substituted:
- (c) Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills, consisting of 11 Members,
12. Standing Order 52.01(1) is amended by striking out clauses (a), (b) and (c) and substituting the following:
- (a) Standing Committee on Families and Communities – mandate related to the areas of Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Education, Health, Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing and Service Alberta;
- (b) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future – mandate related to the areas of Advanced Education, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Labour and Immigration and Infrastructure;
- (c) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship – mandate related to the areas of Agriculture and Forestry, Energy, Environment and Parks, Indigenous Relations, Municipal Affairs, Transportation and Treasury Board and Finance.
13. The following is added after Standing Order 52.01:
- Subcommittees**
- 52.011(1) Unless otherwise ordered, a standing or special committee shall have the power to appoint one or more subcommittees, which shall report from time to time to the committee.
- (2) Every subcommittee shall be appointed by motion of the committee specifying the terms of reference and the membership of the subcommittee.
- (3) At its first meeting of a new Legislature, every Legislative Policy Committee and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall appoint a Subcommittee on Committee Business to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair and to report to the committee on the business of the committee.
14. Standing Order 52.04 is amended by renumbering Standing Order 52.04 as Standing Order 52.04(1) and by adding the following after suborder (1):
- (2) Subject to Standing Order 59.01(11), suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the committee on the matter referred to it.
15. Standing Order 59.01 is amended by adding the following after suborder (11):
- (12) Suborder (11) does not apply to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills.
16. Standing Order 59.02(3) is struck out and the following is substituted:
- (3) During consideration of interim, supplementary or main estimates, the following individuals may be seated at a committee or in the Assembly:
- (a) officials of the Government, to assist the Minister whose estimates are under consideration;

- (b) staff of the opposition, to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration.
- (4) During main estimates consideration, officials of the Government may respond to questions from a committee at the request of the Minister.
17. Standing Order 64(1)(a) is amended by striking out subclause (ii).
18. Standing Order 74.1 is amended
- (a) by striking out the heading and substituting “Referral of Government Bill to a committee after first reading”, and
- (b) by striking out suborder (1)(b).
19. The following is added after Standing Order 74.1:
- Referral of public Bill other than Government Bill after first reading**
- 74.11(1) After a public Bill other than a Government Bill has been read a first time, the Bill stands referred to the Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee.
- (2) The Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee shall report back to the Assembly within 8 sitting days of the day on which the Bill was referred to the Committee.
20. Standing Order 74.2(2) is struck out and the following is substituted:
- (2) Upon the concurrence of a committee report that a Bill be proceeded with, the Bill shall be placed on the Order Paper for second reading and, in the case of a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the Bill shall, subject to the precedence assigned to Bills standing on the Order Paper, be taken up on the next available Monday following the day on which the Assembly concurred in the report.
21. Standing Order 89 is amended by striking out “Standing Order 3” and substituting “Standing Order 3(5)”.
22. The following Standing Orders are amended by striking out “Private Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee” wherever it occurs:
- Standing Order 91(4)
 - Standing Order 96(2)
 - Standing Order 98(1) and (3)
 - Standing Order 100(1)
 - Standing Order 101
 - Standing Order 102
 - Standing Order 103
 - Standing Order 104
 - Standing Order 105(1)
 - Standing Order 106
23. The headings preceding Standing Orders 98, 100 and 105 are amended by striking out “Private Bills Committee” and substituting “Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills Committee”.
- B. And be it further resolved that upon passage of this motion any public bills other than government bills that stand on the Order Paper for second reading are deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills in accordance with Standing Order 74.11(1) and notwithstanding Standing Order 74.11(2) the committee shall report back to the Assembly on these bills within 12 sitting days of the day this motion is passed.
- C. And be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion shall come into force on passage.
- [Adjourned debate May 29: Mr. Shandro]
- The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.
- Ms Pancholi:** Edmonton-Whitemud.
- The Acting Speaker:** Edmonton-Whitemud. I stand corrected.
- Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize I’m a little short, sometimes hard to see. I do wear heels.
- Thank you very much. I’m honoured to be here today to speak to Motion 11 put forward by the member opposite. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this primarily because as a private member – we are all private members, but particularly as a private member of the opposition – I think many of my colleagues on the other side should also be very interested in this. This is an opportunity for me to speak to changes that would directly affect my ability to represent my constituents, my ability to have my voice heard in this House. So the opportunity to speak is very much appreciated, particularly because, if I’ll be honest, it seems like the intent of this is to really stifle the ability of private members to speak, so the opportunity to do so right now I will take.
- To begin with, I guess, I want to comment on the fact that I’m a little surprised. You know, I’m a new MLA. I’m new to the processes. I just, like so many other members, saw the list of committees that came out and saw the titles of the committees and reviewed the documents describing what each committee is responsible for. All of us as MLAs, whether opposition or government, got assigned to particular committees.
- You know, my background is that I’m a lawyer. I’m a bit of a geek. I like things like committees. I like things like opportunities to break things down. I even put forward that I was interested in being on a private members’ committee because I like legislation. I like to look at that stuff and go through it. So I was excited. It’s an opportunity to do what I’ve been elected to do, which is the business of our Assembly.
- Then to find out that we do have a standing committee that’s specifically tasked with dealing with standing orders, to me, when we’re talking about, you know, changes to standing orders, well, again, going back to my legal training and my background, that seems like right within the mandate of that standing committee. So I’m surprised that that committee actually seems to be being completely useless right now. Now, I’m not on that committee, but I know that there are a number of members on both sides, particularly on the government side, who have now had, I guess, some of their work taken away.
- Frankly, let’s be honest. We know that in a government this size ministers get a lot of work, a lot to do, but private members don’t get a lot to do. So committees are something that’s pretty important, and to basically have one of your pieces of work essentially stripped away, I would be disappointed. I mean, I frankly like being busy. That’s clearly why I ran for election. You know, we’ve all got full lives outside of this, but clearly, I like being busy. I wanted to do the work of being an MLA, and I think that includes sitting on committees. So I was pretty surprised that this is not going to the standing committee on standing orders. I would think that it should do that.
- Needless to say, here we are. I would like to speak first to the proposed changes to the introductions of guests. I’ll tell a little story. I’ve actually had the honour of being introduced in this House twice prior to becoming an MLA. Once I was a constituency assistant for an MLA many years ago, and one of my first days on

the job she invited me to come as a new CA. I think I might have been 21 at the time. I was pretty excited. She introduced me as her new constituency assistant. I got some lovely notes from MLAs from all parties welcoming me. It was pretty amazing for me. I would say that that experience, certainly, was my first time, rather than school tours, of actually being in this House. It was pretty incredible to have my name spoken in this House, in this revered Assembly. To go back to *Hansard*, because part of my job as a constituency assistant was then going back to *Hansard* and clipping – back in that day, you know, you’d photocopy and you’d actually take a highlighter; there were no PDFs. To see my own name was pretty impressive.

The second opportunity I had to be introduced in the House was when I was part of a group of civil servants who worked very hard on some legislation that was brought forward by a previous Progressive Conservative government. We were very hard-working bureaucrats and public servants. We worked on that project for three years, in the development of legislation. The minister who finally was able to have that piece of legislation passed thanked us by name, the group of people who had worked on that project, introduced us in the House. Again, I can tell you that as a public servant, you don’t get a lot of opportunities to get recognized, and that was a pretty impressive recognition of our work. It was a small moment, but again to see my name listed with those of my colleagues, who had worked very hard for many years on a project that we thought was very important, to have us be recognized was pretty fantastic.

You know, these were small moments, but they were moments for me that engaged me with the work of this Assembly, and it engaged me in the political process. It got me excited about being here. We all know we just came through a campaign, all of us as private members. We all worked very hard to get where we are. We all had a lot of support from families, from friends, from supporters – there were a lot of interesting stakeholders we met – and we have small opportunities in this House to thank those people on the record for their work and to keep them engaged and to keep reminding them of the important work that we do in this Assembly.

I know that a lot of members on the other side and a lot of members on this side have families. We have kids. One of the moments that I was most looking forward to was introducing my children in the House. My kids are four and six years old. They were pretty involved in coming out on the campaign trail, well, in between naps. My son thought door-knocking was pretty fun because he got to ring doorbells, so he liked that. But, you know, during that process he didn’t really understand what my job was, what I was doing when I was saying that I was running to be an MLA.

They came for my swearing-in. It was, you know, a wonderful experience. There were a lot of people here. It was very crowded. There were a lot of people who were supporters and were happy to see our caucus get sworn in. But, you know, they kind of sat in the back row. They couldn’t really see very well. They’re short; they’re four and six. I was looking forward to the opportunity to have them in the front row, where they could stand up and they could wave to their mom, and their mom could thank them and have that moment.

I’m sure we all have family members and people who are important to us who we would like to introduce in this House. It’s a pretty special moment. There are not a lot of opportunities for those personalized special moments in this House, and I think it’s something we all value. You know, I think it’s a really important thing, and I appreciate the comments that came forward.

As I’ve mentioned, this is my first term. I know that there have probably been a lot of times where the introductions of guests have been used in different ways to perhaps stretch things out or spend

time, maybe partisan statements. I understand it happens on both sides, and I think there are ways to deal with that without eliminating the personal touch of introducing guests in this House. I think we could put time limits. I think we could put limitations on how many guests are introduced. There are ways to do that without eliminating this very personal moment that is part of the important work that we do here, that really brings it home for the families, who don’t get to see us because we’re working late hours, you know, up early, home late. Those are the moments that are really important, and we can still recognize those moments and still keep to a timely fashion. There are ways to do that.

Now, the hon. Government House Leader made some comments when he introduced this motion that somehow the number of members’ statements would be increased; however, I still fail to see any proposed amendment by the members from government or from the House leader himself to actually increase the number of members’ statements. It specifically sets out in Standing Order 7(4) that there will only be six members’ statements. If there is an opportunity to increase that number of members’ statements to make up for the lack of introductions, that’s something to be considered, but I don’t see that on the record. All I’m hearing right now is eliminating the ability of individual members to make those personal connections and make those introductions in the House. So, you know, I think that there are opportunities here to really improve the process and to preserve our small moments that we have with our families, friends, supporters, and stakeholders.

The other thing I want to mention – and the Leader of the Official Opposition yesterday in her comments on the standing order changes I think said this very well – is that, you know, there is a proposed change here which is small. It talks about, basically, removing the regular morning sittings and making it more of a matter of giving notice of that.

She made a very good comment, which really resonated with me. She said that the reason why the standing orders are the way they are, where there are regular morning sittings and night sittings are optional and notice must be given, is that the intent of those changes, that were brought in by the former government, by the NDP, was to make it a family-friendly environment for MLAs and that we want to take all the steps that we can to encourage more predictability in the day-to-day work of our Assembly so that those MLAs with young children have more of an opportunity to arrange child care, to move that forward. I think that’s important. I think we do need to have some predictability, not only for those members who might currently need that, but also we want to attract more people like that. So, you know, I do appreciate her comments on that.

10:40

The last thing I want to speak to, because I know there are other members of my caucus who want to speak a little bit, is I’d like to talk about abstentions and the ability to abstain while sitting in your seat. As I’ve mentioned before in this House and I will continue to mention, especially as an opposition member, I was elected, as we all were, to represent my constituents, and that might mean that we’re sometimes going to be at odds. That’s part of the tension that exists in our representative democracy. Sometimes we have party platforms, sometimes we have directions from our leader, sometimes we have personally-held beliefs, and sometimes we have the things that our constituents want us to do. It is our job as elected representatives to balance those and sometimes do things that are difficult but to actually represent.

I think allowing members to abstain from voting is actually a neglect of our responsibility. We were elected to come in here and to vote on matters, to actually put on the record, state our views,

and to vote. Sometimes that may mean we're going to vote in ways that either our constituents or maybe even our personal beliefs are at odds with, but that's our responsibility. I come back to, actually, again, my legal background a little bit. As a lawyer, you know, you're constantly balancing those challenges between clients' interests, preserving the rule of law, and having respect for the law. Sometimes that might be at odds with your personally-held beliefs, but again you have a responsibility to balance that. I take those responsibilities seriously, and I continue to take that seriously as an elected member of this Assembly.

I think we should all be held to account to vote and to do what we were elected to do. Sometimes that's going to be awkward and that's going to be difficult and we're going to receive push-back from constituents, the people in our lives who might hold the same views as us, from our party, from our leader. But nobody elected us because this job was easy. We all know that. We've worked pretty hard to get here. It's a tough job. We have an obligation to vote and to make our views heard. I don't think we were elected here to sit quietly and abstain.

Those are my thoughts on the changes. I'm all for, you know, efficiencies and for making the process smoother. I think there are ways to do that, however, without silencing our voices as private members. There are ways to do that to allow the personal touches of us being able to introduce guests that come to see us do our work in the House, and I think we should all fight very hard to protect the rights and privileges that we have under the standing orders. We're members of caucuses, we are members of political parties, but we are also individual MLAs.

We have obligations, and I believe we need to preserve those protections and those privileges and rights that we have. There are lots of opportunities where we will be swayed and held to – you know, we have whips for a reason. They will tell us which way to vote on things. We know that exists. But we have opportunities within our system where we as private members have the rights and authorities to speak our minds, to represent our constituents, and to have those personal moments with people in our lives and our stakeholders, and I don't want to see that taken away.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. I do think that there are significant issues with this motion, and I believe there are plenty of opportunities for changes.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Under 29(2)(a), we have an opportunity for members for questions and comments.

Seeing none, would anybody else like to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to take a few moments to address a couple of things that are in here. I know my colleagues have spoken at length about this, so I think I'm going to focus on a few of the pieces that are more important to me.

Certainly, one of the things that's in this set of standing order changes that I think is of concern to me is with respect to private members' bills going to a committee. The challenge, I think, is that it's not clear how much of a delay that's going to pose. As our leader said, if it really is the case that we're not going to do a throne speech with each iteration, that may solve some of those problems. But if it isn't the case, then a lot more of those private members' bills are not going to have a chance to get debated, and I think that's really sad.

I'm just going to refer to a couple of private members' bills that passed in the 29th Legislature that I think were really important.

The former Member for Calgary-Bow, for instance, brought forward a bill that helped women who were victims of domestic violence be able to break their leases. That was so they could leave their home so that the perpetrator wouldn't know where they were, or if they were in a financial situation where they were no longer able to pay that lease, they weren't locked into continuing to live with the perpetrator of domestic violence simply because of a lease. I think, you know, we've seen the benefit of that legislation already. It has had an impact on many lives. I think that private member's bill was very, very important.

A couple of other private members' bills went through. The Member for Calgary-West, actually, had a private member's bill in the 29th Legislature that went through, having to do with pill presses for fentanyl. I think that that was an important bill. You know, it was his opportunity to step forward and say: I care about this, and this is something I'm passionate about, and I'm going to do something about it. I think that that's very important.

The former Member for Calgary-North West also had a bill that came forward, a disabilities' advocate. That's a really important bill as well. That was a private member's bill also. That's three things already.

One of the ones that's really near and dear to my heart that came forward was actually from the former Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. He brought forward a bill. I remember because we had many discussions. He was at the time my critic, and we used to talk back and forth quite a lot, he and I. He had come forward with this bill. He brought it to me ahead of time to ask for support. The bill, he said, arose out of seeing his own children starting to use the Internet and starting to use social media and texting and that sort of thing, and he was really concerned. The thing that he was concerned about was essentially the use of intimate images, so he brought forward a bill to deal with that. I thought that that was a really important step for him to take. It was a really important way for him to show to his constituents and to the entire province, you know, what he was really made of. I think the 29th Legislature had the opportunity to support him in that.

Those are a few of the reasons that I think that allowing private members to be able to come forward with bills is important. Those bills can come from all different sides of the House, and they can do a lot of important things moving forward. That's why I think that's important.

With respect to the morning sittings I think it's been articulated at length, but I'll just deal with my particular circumstances. Obviously, I'm an MLA who represents Calgary. That means that when I come up here, my partner stays in Calgary. His job is there, so he works there. My daughter comes with me, which means that I need child care when I'm up here. My parents live in Calgary, my husband lives in Calgary, so it's just me and my daughter and our child care. That inability to predict schedules is very challenging for me because I have to give someone else notice of the hours that I'm going to be working. So I think it creates a difficulty for me, and it creates, in particular, a difficulty for women MLAs from other parts of the province, I guess.

The last thing I wanted to talk about was abstentions. This is probably the issue that I'm most passionate about because I think that we have a duty in this place as elected representatives, as people who've been sent here to have a view. I don't think that you get to be neutral as to other people's rights. When it comes to debating issues of women's reproductive rights, when it comes to debating issues of LGBTQ rights, I don't think you get to be neutral about that because being neutral is essentially to say – I mean, the point of rights is to protect a minority group, potentially, or a group that has historically had less power from a group that has more power, that is dominant, that is often the majority. To say, "Well,

I'm not going to have an opinion on that," when it is, in fact, your job, when you have been sent here to have an opinion on that – I really think that that just flies in the face of our duty as elected representatives.

10:50

You know, it's hard. It's hard to balance different competing interests. It's hard to weigh all the different factors. I mean, the members over there are certainly aware of it right now. We certainly were when we were in government. It's difficult. Sometimes the choices – the balance is hard to get perfect, but we have to do it. In fact, failing to act is almost always itself an action.

You know, that's the problem with these amendments. They suggest that a failure to act is not doing something, but actually it is doing something. When someone comes forward and says, "My rights have been violated," if the courts were to say, "Well, we're not going to act because we don't really want to have an opinion because it's a sticky social issue," well, that would be absurd. But I feel it's equally absurd for us in this place to say: well, I don't want to have an opinion because it's a sticky social issue. Well, no. That's someone's right. They're coming forward to you and saying that they do or they feel they ought to have a right, and they feel it has been violated. I think that we have to have an opinion on that, whether it's difficult or not, whether it requires soul-searching or not, whether it requires difficult intellectual work or not. That is the reason that I am troubled, very much so, by these changes.

I hope that all members will consider that and will consider it not only as we vote on these standing orders but will consider it going forward if they choose to in fact sit in their place and not have an opinion on an issue. That itself is an action, it is a decision, and it does have consequences for the people of Alberta.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a) any questions or comments?

Are there any other members wishing to speak on this matter?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise on Government Motion 11 and share my thoughts on it. Of course, much like my other colleagues here on the opposition side, we have some major concerns with this legislation, the first being the inability, if this legislation is passed, to introduce school groups. Now, I've had the opportunity over the last four years to introduce many of the schools in my community. It really is one of the highlights of my time spent here in the Assembly.

Of course, it's always very important to represent your constituents and talk about whether we support or don't support a bill that's before us and why that is. But when we have a school group and have the opportunity to first take a picture with them as they move through their tour of the Legislature and then be able to introduce them in this House, it's something that's very important to me. I think it's very important to the other members who have had the opportunity to do it so far. Even for the people who have had the opportunity in the 30th Legislature to do it so far: I'm sure that they've enjoyed that as well.

It's very frustrating for me to hear that we would even consider changing the process of that. I mean, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the students come here after having the opportunity to hear from me in their classroom. We're often invited as MLAs to talk about the democratic process, to talk about the provincial Legislature and what it is we do here. For them to come here and, instead of having the opportunity to hear their own MLA introduce

them, to have it done by the Speaker does not mean nearly as much as it does coming from the members themselves. I think that that's a really important piece of why I'm not planning to support this government motion.

I think this has a lot more to do than what is being told to us. Over the last four years in the 29th Legislature, introducing school groups really did not interrupt the proceedings of the House, you know, with very few times where we had to actually go past the usual scheduling to introduce guests, introduce school groups. It's very frustrating for me.

You know, on top of the school groups piece: the willingness of this government to take away our ability to introduce stakeholders and introduce constituents. Just as important – well, I'm not going to say, "more important" – as introducing school groups is our ability to introduce stakeholders. We as MLAs have the opportunity to meet with people in our community that have concerns, whether it be with legislation before the House or they want to propose legislation or just want to talk about something else that's on their mind. Our ability to introduce them in this Legislature is part of our ability to advocate on their behalf. I've brought in constituents that were suffering from rare diseases, talking about the importance of Rare Disease Day.

I think taking five, 10 seconds to highlight that in an introduction of a guest, if we don't have the opportunity that day to provide a member's statement for that person, is something that we should be able to do. We as opposition members now have more opportunities for members' statements, a lot more than the government members will find that they have, so they are losing more than we are, really. It's something that the government members should consider.

Over the last four years I've had the opportunity to invite many special guests to the Legislature and provide them with introductions. Then you can clip it and give it to them, and it's very important to them. To say, "No; the Speaker is going to say your name into the record and probably, maybe not even mention what organization you're with or the important work that you've done in your community that brought you to the Legislature in the first place," is quite frustrating. Really, for me the ability to introduce guests is incredibly important, and I think it should be very important to the government members as well.

Now, of course, another topic that's come up a lot is the banning of desk thumping. You know, this really is just showing that we have a politician coming from Ottawa trying to impose ideas from Ottawa on us. This has been in place for a very long time in Alberta's history. It's been a tradition, so to come and say that all of a sudden it's a really big issue, that it's holding up the House or wrecking decorum here in the House is just simply untrue. I mean, whether we're banging on our desks or, as we've seen, the government is now clapping their hands, it really doesn't make a difference. The clapping is just as loud if not potentially louder than banging on desks.

Mr. Schmidt: It hurts my ears.

Mr. Carson: Yeah. It hurts my ears as well.

I don't know why we've come to this decision. We are going to show our appreciation in one way or another. Desk thumping or clapping is not used as a way to intimidate people often. I mean, when we were in government, there were often times where our members would be speaking about something that's important to them, about a situation in their life, or even about a guest that they'd invited, and they needed a moment to collect themselves. We've often used desk thumping as a way to give them that moment to collect their thoughts and be able to continue on.

I don't think this is as big an issue as the government is trying to make it. I don't think that it's something, really, that we should be spending a lot of time talking about in the Legislature because I don't think it needs to be changed. I'm not sure why it was so important for the government to bring this forward, but really it just shows that, you know, the new Premier thinks that Ottawa does it better than Alberta, and he wants to impose that on us.

Of course, overall the changes that are being implemented or that the government hopes to implement are really just taking away the ability of the members in this Legislature to advocate on their constituents' behalf, whether it's getting rid of the introduction of school groups, getting rid of the introduction of special guests.

You know, just as important is the ability of members to bring private members' legislation forward to this House. We've heard many examples of private members bringing forward legislation. The previous Member for Calgary-Bow had a very important piece of legislation where survivors of domestic violence of some sort were able to break their lease, recognizing that it's important to help somebody get out of that situation and then deal with the financial piece after. We need to be able to help people. That wasn't something that needed to go to committee to be studied for months, possibly die on the Order Paper; it was something that had to be passed immediately. The members of the Legislature recognized that, and we were able to do so.

When we talk about cutting red tape – you want to send more bills to committee to be studied. You want to have to bring the bureaucracy of this Assembly together, all very professional and important people, but why do that if we don't have to? Why not discuss it, as is our duty in this Legislature, and then pass it when it's such an easy bill to support and pass?

11:00

Of course, I had my own piece of legislation, which came and was discussed in the Legislature, and it was not supported by all members, so we did send it to committee. That opportunity to do that is still there. If the discussion in the Legislature and the members see fit that that is what we should do, then we can still do that. It didn't take a long time. I think we spent an afternoon deciding on that, and we sent it to committee. It's not like it's taking up a whole lot of time for House proceedings.

[The Speaker in the chair]

For those reasons, I will most definitely not be supporting this Government Motion 11. I think overall it's taking away the rights of not only opposition members but, just as importantly, government members. I think that you as government members will see that you're losing more than we are losing in terms of your ability to advocate on your members' behalf. We're going to have a lot of time over here to talk. You will find out, especially you private members in the back row there, that you are going to be sitting and listening to us a lot. You're going to learn a lot from us over here in the opposition.

Mr. Schmidt: For free.

Mr. Carson: That's right. Most of the members over here have experienced – well, maybe not most of them. I have experienced what it's like to be a private member in the government, and it's a wonderful experience – don't get me wrong – but you're not going to have a lot of time to talk in this Legislature.

Mr. Schmidt: It's a quiet experience.

Mr. Carson: It's a quiet experience. Lots of time to learn, so I really hope you enjoy that experience. It's always a pleasure and,

of course, an honour to be in this Legislature, but don't sit here and give away your rights to represent your constituents, because you only have a set amount of time in here, and you are about to give up half, three-quarters of your ability to advocate on their behalf, so just don't do it. Do not support this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'd like to thank the hon. member for his comments. I might just be a little bit curious. Noting that the private members will have an opportunity to learn from the opposition over this term, I just might wonder how much you may have learned from the former Opposition House Leader during your time in government.

On Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any questions or comments for the member?

Are there any others wishing to speak to Government Motion 11? I'm interested to hear what the Member for Calgary-McCall has for us this morning.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to the standing order changes, but with respect to your comment about learning from the opposition, I have certainly enjoyed your comments here and there when you were in opposition. I think there are opportunities that government private members on that side will be able to learn because this is the first time in the history of Alberta that this opposition has a former Premier, 10 ministers, experienced people. They certainly are in a position to bring a lot of experience to the table.

With respect to rules, I guess, they exist to maintain orderly proceedings in this House. Over the last little while I think we heard frequently that we will bring civility to this place, we will bring decorum to this place, which clearly assumes that somehow there is some kind of incivility there, there's something that's not in proper order.

When I was looking at these changes, I was thinking about it from that lens, that somehow these changes are making this place more civil, bringing some kind of revolutionary changes to decorum. But when we look at it, the changes: from now on instead of desk thumping, we will be clapping. I was not able to find any kind of rationale for this change, that clapping is more civil than desk thumping. As far as I can tell, many parliaments across this country, across the Commonwealth, across this world: they do use desk thumping. I didn't see before in the procedures whether somewhere it was mentioned what members should do, whether they should clap or desk thump.

We were hearing from this government that they will reduce red tape. I think the first thing they did – they even tried to regulate how members should express their feelings within this House. They are bringing in more regulations, even how we should use our hands, whether we should clap or whether we should desk thump: so much red tape.

I think there is no rationale whatsoever, and desk thumping has been a long tradition in parliamentary democracies and Legislatures. This is just a preference of one person or group of individuals, who just prefer clapping over desk thumping, and that has been imposed on the entire Legislature, put into regulation, put into standing orders, and has created more red tape. I'm so not pleased with that, and certainly I will be opposing that as well.

The second thing which is really concerning is the procedure with respect to private members' bills. As many of my colleagues mentioned, with true private members' bills we have been able to make very important and significant changes in this province, changes that impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of Albertans. One example that comes to mind and I believe was mentioned by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View is the creation of the

office of the disability advocate, for such an advocate in this province. That idea came as a private member's bill from the then MLA for Calgary-North West. That office now has the ability to impact thousands and thousands of Albertans living with disabilities, their rights, their interests. They can be represented. They have a person. They have an office to go to if they have concerns with respect to any services they are getting from the government.

These private members' bills do play an important role, and the way it's now structured, they will go automatically to committee. That will certainly make it difficult for those bills to pass. We have seen even under the existing procedure, where one of my colleagues in the 29th Legislature, the MLA for Calgary-Currie, brought forward legislation essentially making discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts exempt for eligibility to the AISH program. That was an important bill that had the support of 3,500 Albertans, who signed a petition, and then he consulted with almost 500 Albertans here in Edmonton, in Calgary, in Lethbridge, and in many other places. Every MLA then heard from Albertans, but that bill died on the Order Paper, and later we adopted it as a government bill.

But the point I'm trying to make is that even under existing procedures it was difficult to get that private member's bill passed, and now it will pretty much make it close to impossible that any private member's bill will ever see the light of day or will ever pass through this Legislature. I think if we were to restore civility, I guess, we would create more opportunities for private members to bring forward good ideas, like creating a disability advocate, like exempting discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts, like creating safer spaces legislation that was created by a colleague in the last Legislature, the MLA for Calgary-Bow. But this is making it impossible to do. It's pretty much shutting doors on the private members, so I'm strongly opposed to these changes.

11:10

These changes, I think, will impact us on this side of the House, and they will also impact government private members because everybody sitting outside the executive are all private members. I can see many people who, when they were in opposition, were there in previous terms, like the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat, the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon, experienced private members. They may have ideas. Sure, they didn't make it to Executive Council, but they can still use this opportunity to bring forward ideas that they may have based on their experience and make changes that will positively impact Albertans across this province. This change, I think, should not be supported by any private member across both sides of the aisles, and I think that as private members we should stand up for our rights so that we are able to represent our constituents and we are able to contribute to this province positively.

We will be opposing this change. We are very much opposed to this change, and I urge all private members to consider that and how it impacts your ability to do your job, how it impacts your ability to represent your constituents, how it impacts your ability to make lasting changes, like other private members made in the previous 29th Legislature.

Then there were changes made which give the House leader the ability to provide notices and change morning sittings, change the sitting schedule. I think we can all agree that this job requires managing of our schedules, managing of our time very carefully, and these rules that were there exist to provide us with that certainty so that we can manage our schedules accordingly. Now, if this regulation, these changes, were to pass, that creates a lot of

uncertainty, that with a notice in the evening we will know whether we have the morning off or not. For all of us it's difficult to change a schedule on those short notices.

My colleagues have also mentioned how it impacts those MLAs who have young children and who have to arrange for babysitters and make all those arrangements, how it's impacting them. When we were in government, we had colleagues who have young kids, who gave birth as MLAs here. With a view to making our Legislature family friendly, with a view to making sure that all Albertans, women in particular, are able to participate in these processes, we brought in this morning sitting. We made changes with a view to making this Legislature, this workplace, a family-friendly workplace. Giving the Government House Leader that ability to change the schedules of all members like this, I think, is in no way a very civil thing to do, and I don't know how it restores decorum or brings civility to our Legislature. So we are very much opposed to this change as well.

Then, I think, a couple of other things. One was that these changes will also allow MLAs to abstain from voting. Many of my colleagues talked about this change and how important it is that when we come here, we be able to represent, we be able to weigh in on all issues that are brought before this House. We have seen this before, for instance, in the previous Legislature, when we brought in Bill 9. We saw the opposition walking out of the House nine times – 13 times, actually, just to correct the record. We believe that we live in a world where we represent constituencies where people have different views, varying views on different issues, but as their representative that's our job. That's what we signed up for. That's what we will do to the best of our abilities. We will represent you.

This one clearly just gives an option to MLAs such that if they don't want to weigh in on something, if they're not comfortable weighing in on something, instead of running out of the House, they can still sit here and exercise this rule, rely on this rule and not vote on issues that matter to Albertans. Certainly, it undermines the accountability of MLAs, the accountability of people representative to their electorate, that they can use this rule to say that they have this option. They have three options – yes, no, and abstain from voting – so they just exercise their, I guess, options available to them. As our leader said, this provides MLAs the opportunity to duck and dive on issues that they are not comfortable with. It removes accountability for MLAs, and this change should not be passed. Again I will ask all MLAs to consider that.

Lastly, I think I'll speak a little bit to introductions. I think introductions are important for many different reasons. This House, this Chamber, this Legislature belongs to Albertans, and on the face of it what this change says is that those who own this place, those who elect us and send us to this place, will not be allowed to be introduced or recognized who they are in this Chamber. It's absolutely disrespectful to Albertans, and it's ignoring those Albertans who sent us here. And especially the government, who talks about their mandate – I think it's disrespectful.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Government Motion 11. I know a lot of ground has been covered by my caucus colleagues on the motion already this morning; however, I wanted to add a few of my own remarks and speak in defence of traditions of this House that are being assailed by this Government Motion 11 and speak to what I believe is really the underlying motivation behind most if not all of these changes to

our standing orders. All these unnecessary proposals stem from a need by the Premier to solve what he believes are his pet peeves by imposing an Ottawa-centric view of how he believes all Canadian Legislatures should work.

We on this side of the House believe that we should let the Parliament of Canada operate in its own way. Whether it's the carbon levy or the legislative standing orders, the ND Official Opposition in Alberta firmly believes that we should operate under Alberta rules that are traditional to our own House rather than importing them from Ottawa.

These measures, for example, that are designed to prevent floor crossings really are measures designed to protect the government caucus from themselves. The current makeup of the House, Mr. Speaker, leads me to say that it's very safe to project that every opposition member currently sitting would rather jump into a lake of fire than cross the floor to join the UCP, but given the history of fractionalization of the conservative movement in Canada, I can only say that it's probably motivated by a fear that the schism that continually plagues that movement and that party will return.

11:20

The UCP is made up largely of members who ran under a different banner, so it's a bit ironic. It feels like the Premier is worried that some of his members will break ranks and form their own party. Certainly, on this side of the House we have 24 members that stand together and will be doing so for the next four years and into the next election cycle.

Now, as far as the abstention issue, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear what's going on there. The UCP is really trying to hide their own members. They know there are members with hateful views amongst their ranks. There are very controversial positions . . .

Mr. Ellis: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dach: . . . on gay rights and women's rights and who knows what else.

The Speaker: Hon. member, a point of order has been called.
The government whip.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, of course, under 23(h), (i), or (j). Pick one. I mean, obviously, what is being said by this particular member is completely insulting. It imputes false or unavowed motives to other members within this House. It is completely unparliamentary, and I ask that he withdraw those comments or, at the very minimum, apologize to this Chamber and to every member in this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Anyone wishing to comment?

Mr. Bilous: Sure. Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. This is a mere difference of opinion. We know that in the past former members of half of the party that is now the UCP did make significant comments that were very, very offensive, and frankly that's part of the reason why back in 2012 the Wildrose Party did not form government. They had quite a few members with some pretty abhorrent views. In regard to the comments that the Member for Edmonton-McClung made, in my opinion, it's a difference of opinion. This isn't a point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. While I would agree that the member is certainly sharing some very strong opinions and I would caution him that his language certainly could create disorder,

I will at this point in time take a broad swath as to whether or not the exact language was in fact a point of order. But I would just caution the member to do just that: use caution when making allegations that may create disorder or language that in fact may create disorder. Having said that, I ask the member to proceed but to do so in a respectful tone that is likely to create order.

Debate Continued

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue briefly. I appreciate your sound advice.

I know that members opposite are sensitive to some of the accusations that are being made around their reasons for supporting Government Motion 11 to bring changes to this House which will affect the many traditional operations of the rules of this place, but it is still within my purview as a member, as a private member, to speak on behalf of my constituents as well as other MLAs in this House to defend the rights of private members to speak freely and express ourselves and not to silently accept the desire of this Government Motion 11 to place restrictions on my ability to operate as an MLA in defence of my constituents' directions.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: Hon. member, just to provide some additional framework around my caution, it was not to say that you can't hold strong opinions. It was not to say that you can't defend your constituents. Having said that, when the Speaker provides some caution or, in fact, rules on a point of order, there are limits to what you are allowed to say. So I just want to be clear that you're not challenging the chair here in your remarks about what you are or are not allowed to do here in the Chamber. I'm an adamant defender of private members' ability to defend or speak on behalf of their constituents, but, to be clear, the Speaker can rule on language that is parliamentary or language that may create disorder, and that would fall under the purview of the Speaker.

Debate Continued

Mr. Dach: Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Speaker. I simply wanted to say that I would encourage all members of this House to oppose Government Motion 11 and do so by voting against it, as I will and hope that all my other caucus colleagues and members of the Legislature do.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Are there others who wish to speak to Government Motion 11? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I'm very pleased to stand and speak against, really, an omnibus amendment to the standing orders that are presented here and that many of my colleagues have already spoken about. You know, certainly, our NDP caucus has a view on this, but other Albertans do also. A respected journalist for the *Edmonton Journal* actually called these standing order omnibus amendments: a solution for a problem that doesn't exist. There's no problem with this. This is fine the way it has run for many years. So I certainly concur with his views.

I guess I'd like to speak first on just the introduction of school groups. I'm going to go down memory lane a little bit. As a young grade 6 student in Harry Gray elementary in Valleyview, Alberta, my MLA for Smoky River was Marvin Moore. I don't know how many of you remember Marvin Moore, but he was my MLA for many,

many mandates. Perhaps the MLA for Central Peace-Notley will know who he is. He introduced my class. We had a big class trip to come and to meet with our MLA. He was the minister of various things, too. I don't recall exactly now, but, I mean, I know that it was a significant opportunity for me to understand what this thing called provincial government is. It certainly stimulated my interest in it, and I know that it has stimulated many other students across the province.

I mean no disrespect to you, Mr. Speaker, but having your local MLA, who you know because they've been to your classroom, you know, you see them in the community, introduce you and having that relationship with them is far different than someone that they don't know. Certainly, your own constituents would know you. As the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview now I've been to many schools. Of course, we know that in grade 6 the curriculum talks about the Alberta government and helps students learn about that, stimulates their interest in it. I've had the honour to go to many schools in my riding and know that there's a keen interest and that when they get to come to the Legislature, sit in that gallery, and be introduced by their MLA, it's a significant event.

You know, of course, one of the things that disturbs me in our society, I guess, is just sort of the lack of interest in aspects of democracy, certainly in voting. We have low voter turnout. So, really, starting at a very young age, starting in grade 6, even younger, stimulates a student's interest in politics. I mean, it's so important for a healthy democracy to have high voter turnout, and, sadly, in Alberta it's in the 60s or it has been in the 50s or even the 40s. Taking away this can only erode that, and I certainly don't support it.

Besides my experience as a student myself, as a young girl in a small town in northern Alberta, when I came to Edmonton at 18 and went to university, got my bachelor of arts in political science and then graduated, I worked for Ray Martin. Ray Martin was the MLA for Edmonton-Norwood, of course, and I was honoured to be his constituency assistant. I, again, was introduced by him in the Assembly, and that was very important to me, and it was a way for him to thank me publicly. I think that, you know, having the Speaker introduce me wouldn't have had the same impact. Again, I just want to really say that there's a vast difference.

11:30

Certainly, as a social worker for 30 years – each year we have Social Work Week, and as a leader in my profession I would come with my colleagues, and many of us would be introduced to the Legislature. That meant a lot to us. Certainly, working as a social worker in Children's Services was another opportunity. Although it wasn't my local MLA, it was the minister, not the Speaker, and the minister was responsible and someone, of course, we worked more closely with. Again, it was that kind of acknowledgement that really made it worth while. Again, I'm bringing these examples up to you, Mr. Speaker, because these changes will take away that opportunity.

I guess, just to talk about this a bit more, my own children, my three sons, went to school here in Edmonton. When they were in grade 6, each of their classes came here, and they were introduced by their MLAs, and that was a proud moment for them. For many years, even, they would have pictures of their MLA and their class, that they had taken in the rotunda, on their bureaus, and they would talk about the time that they got to go to the Assembly and meet with their MLA. I remember MLA Kevin Taft introduced my two younger sons.

Again, it seems like a time-honoured tradition that's just being disregarded by this UCP government. As Keith Gerein said – I'll just say it again: a solution for a problem that doesn't exist. Actually, it really takes away some very important, I think, traditions of our House here.

I guess the next point I'd like to move on to is just the banning of desk thumping. Certainly, you know, the UCP government and the Official Opposition NDP have a different value system, I would say, a pretty clearly significant difference in world view. Certainly, that was illustrated this morning when we talked about Bill 1. We see things much differently compared to the other side of the House. That sort of contrast in values means that at times we're listening, both sides of the House, to things that we don't agree with. We don't see them as values we hold dear. When we do hear people speaking from our world view, our value system, then we do want to celebrate that.

Again, another time-honoured tradition in this House is that we do desk thumping, and that is something that has gone on in the Alberta Legislature for years and years and years. To just take that away, again, I don't see the point in that. There's no problem. It's looking for a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. So I just really challenge us moving forward on that.

The next one I'd like to talk about – and this, I feel, is really a very serious and substantial issue – is that the UCP government just wants to wipe away and not really have their members be accountable or have anybody in this House be accountable. They're wanting to allow members to abstain while seated in the Chamber with no record of them doing so. I mean, there are many, many key issues that we speak about here in the Assembly that – you know, our constituents don't have time to watch us on TV, to read *Hansard*, to know all that, so they may need to look back sometimes if they do wonder where we stood on an important issue. Then they can search it and find out what kind of a decision their local MLA made on a particular issue of interest to them, that's important to them, that they care about. Here we're just: "Oh, yeah. You don't have to even identify how you stand on particular issues."

I mean, we ran as candidates to be elected to represent our constituents to make a stand on issues, so I really question this. This seems to make no sense to me at all. Certainly, there are controversial issues, but we need to step up and be sure that we are representing our constituents and speaking to issues that are real. You don't get a free pass. It's really important that MLAs do take a stand and stand up. Again, it just sort of boggles the mind why that would be taken out of sort of a regular practice for MLAs.

The next piece of this omnibus amendment of the standing orders is about private members' bills being automatically referred to committee. Of course, this slows the process down, and we already know this is an issue in government. There are emergent issues that need to be dealt with in a timely manner. These private members' bills coming forward can significantly address key issues that are emergent, that are happening right now. This is always going to say: okay; they have got to go to committee, so how long is it going to take in committee? We can't respond in a timely fashion. I'm sure each of you has had constituents say to you: "It just takes so long. I don't have the patience for this." You know, as a legislator myself I know that I get frustrated, too, with how long things take. So why would we take more time?

And then I guess I'm just confused, too, because here, you know, Bill 4 was just introduced, the reduction in red tape. What's this doing? This is just creating another layer, a whole other committee structure for a private member's bill. Those two factors are incongruent. If indeed the UCP government wants to reduce red tape, then this is an example of a way to do that. I mean, it's not even red tape yet because it doesn't exist currently. I just really question that. I guess I believe the hon. members, leaders are logical thinkers, and it just doesn't follow logic. I really question why this is part of this omnibus amendment to the standing orders.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that it's just a way to control some of the backbenchers in the UCP government because

they're concerned about some of the – I don't know – public ideas that have been showcased that may not be actually in line with what the party wants Albertans to know that they're about. But some of them have histories that are sharing something quite different, and that could be disturbing. I just question. Well, maybe it is kind of a darker reason for that. I mean, that's too bad because these are candidates that were vetted by the UCP party and should be representatives that they're proud to stand with, so I'm just questioning that. Is that the purpose that they're not being explicit about?

Anyway, certainly, using their own logic about the reduction in red tape, you know, it just absolutely doesn't make sense for them to be putting forward that private members' bills automatically – automatically – have to go to committee. I just want to reiterate that many issues are emergent and some things need to be dealt with in a very timely manner by private members. Again, as many of my colleagues have said, this does erode private members' any kind of sort of authority to have some leadership. Often when you're not in the Executive Council, it's harder to have your voice heard. This gives elected representatives some authority to do that, so it's very disturbing to me that this is being taken away.

These are some of the, you know, key issues that I have with this omnibus amendment to the standing orders, taking away some of the traditional parliamentary traditions that really add. I mean, I don't think anybody could question that having an opportunity to introduce stakeholders, family members, friends, supporters, student groups adds to our time here. It really has been a joy for me to be able to do that throughout my previous four years, and I just really see no point in that, additionally with the desk thumping. This is also a tradition that is time honoured. I think, as some people have said already, grade 6 students: when they see their MLAs thumping their desks, they enjoy that.

Thank you.

11:40

The Speaker: Questions or comments for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, anyone?

Seeing none, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Government Motion 11. I want to start off my comments by, actually, congratulating the government on bringing forward one section of this government motion that I do in fact support.

Of course, you know, Mr. Speaker, that I'm probably one of the most agreeable and least partisan members of this House, so you wouldn't be surprised to hear me congratulate the government when they've done something right, and of course I'm looking forward to any piece of legislation that they'll do right. So far we're four bills in and they haven't done anything, but at least they've gotten something right with Government Motion 11, and that's particularly section 16, which says that Standing Order 59.02(3) is struck out and the following is substituted:

- (3) During consideration of interim, supplementary or main estimates, the following individuals may be seated at a committee or in the Assembly:
 - (a) officials of the Government, to assist the Minister whose estimates are under consideration;
 - (b) staff of the opposition, to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration.
- (4) During main estimates consideration, officials of the Government may respond to questions from a committee at the request of the Minister.

I want to thank the government for bringing forward that section of this motion because as members here who have been in various previous Legislatures and have gone through the processes of

interim and supplementary supply, we know that the ministers are presenting a very, I guess, high-level overviews of their budgets for their departments, especially in interim and supplementary supply, with few details. Having been in the position to defend the budget items that I was bringing forward in the interim and supplementary supply, I know that I was questioned by my critics and colleagues from the opposition as to what some of the details were. Even though I was very well prepared for those debates, I couldn't have all of the information at my fingertips, so it would have been useful in those situations to have government officials seated next to me here in the Chamber to talk about those things.

I think that by approving this part of the motion, we will substantially enhance the quality of debate around the finances of the province. So I'm looking forward to at least this portion of the motion being approved because, Mr. Speaker, everybody will be much more well informed as a result of the discussions that we're able to undertake with respect to interim, supplementary supply, and main estimates, both here in the Chamber as well as at committee.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise to you that there's nothing else in this motion that I support, so even though the motion does contain that one section that I think is valuable and worth while, the rest of the motion should be rejected. In particular, I will, you know, underline the comments that my hon. friends here from this side have made about removing the introduction of guests from private members.

Certainly, I had the opportunity, of course, in the 29th Legislature to introduce a number of guests. One of the most memorable for me was the introduction of a very avid constituent, somebody that I consider a friend, somebody who writes to all of us here in this Legislature on a daily basis if not at a multiple times per day daily basis, and that was Brad Jones. Brad Jones, of course, takes the time out of his day to write to each and every one of us about the state of Alberta politics. He's not afraid to share his opinions on what the members of the Legislature should do on various matters that are confronting the province. It was a real privilege for me to be able to invite him as my constituent and introduce him to all of the members of the Legislature.

I got a chance to visit with Brad Jones during the election campaign. He came into my campaign office, and he wanted to thank me for being introduced to the Legislature. It was a very meaningful recognition of his interest and passion for Alberta politics. He shared that video of that introduction with all of his friends and family, as you can well imagine, and was very proud, as a person who's deeply engaged and deeply interested in the affairs of this province, that he was able to be introduced to all of the members of the Legislature.

I think it was valuable as well for all of the members of the Legislature to actually be able to meet face to face with somebody who has been so passionate and so vociferous about his opinions on the matters facing the province. To think that those opportunities are now going to be taken away from us is a real shame. It's a meaningful way to recognize people who have made significant contributions to the public life of this province who don't sit in this Chamber, and I think that taking away that opportunity to provide meaningful recognition to those people is a real loss to the public life of the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, what are we trying to save by reducing the time of introducing guests? We set aside a maximum of 20 minutes a day for Introduction of Guests. There have been a handful of days where we've gone over that time, and of course when we've gone over that time, we've unanimously agreed that we should extend the daily Routine so that we can introduce all of the guests that we've brought to the Legislature. It's surprising to me that members who

have so eagerly agreed to and supported the introduction of guests in the past have now turned around and decided that that's no longer a function that this House should serve. I feel that that's really a shame, you know, given the small amount of time and the otherwise lack of accessibility or perceived lack of accessibility that the common person has to the proceedings here at the Legislature. I think it's a real shame to construct those kinds of barriers to public engagement in the province of Alberta.

I understand that it's a practice that's being imported from Ottawa. You know, the party chairman, of course, seems to think that the way Ottawa does things is the way that things should be done everywhere. Everybody here knows that, of course, in Ottawa it's not practical to be able to allow members to introduce guests because they have 300 and some MPs from all across the country. It would be impractical to allow all of those members to introduce guests throughout the day, but we only have 87 member here, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that I could provide you with some education. It really is no time at all given the considerable length of time that we spend here in this Chamber to take 20 minutes or so out of our day and introduce guests and provide that meaningful recognition.

Now on to the matter of desk thumping. You know, the party chairman and the Government House Leader, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre like to talk about decorum, which I find is incredibly ironic, especially given the propensity for the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, as you can well remember, Mr. Speaker, to make up points of order about me in particular. He did that a number of times in the 29th Legislature. He did that again earlier this week, obviously intending to smear my reputation and create disorder in this House. For him to turn around and say, "Oh, I'm a proponent of decorum," is a pill that is too big to swallow. What the desk thumping section of this motion is really intended to do is to shut down dissent.

11:50

Now, I know that the party chairman thinks that he's right and that he likes to run down people who disagree with him both here in the House as well as on social media and in the public. Of course, he also uses some rather clever tactics. He sends out his troll army on social media to smear people who disagree with him on his behalf. I think that there's nothing that has done more to lower the level of discourse in politics than for the party chairman currently here in Alberta to have come back from Ottawa and returned to the province of Alberta.

You know, for him to turn around and say that he is the champion of decorum is something that I don't believe and I don't think anybody in the province of Alberta believes either. It's really about shutting down dissent, shutting down the healthy functioning of democracy. We can't have a democracy if we're not allowed to show our dissent, express disagreement in a number of ways. In fact, sometimes the temperature in this House rises, Mr. Speaker, because some of the things that we're talking about are so disagreeable to some of the members that we can't help but show our vocal and passionate dissent on those issues. That's how a Westminster Parliament is designed to work, Mr. Speaker. You know this better than anyone. If this Assembly were designed to foster partisanship and create a unity of mind on issues, we wouldn't be sitting facing each other. We would all be sitting in rows and desks facing you, Mr. Speaker, which obviously I see is an exciting prospect for you, but it undermines the intent of the Westminster system.

This House is designed to create a clash of ideas and to foster discussion and debate. It only functions well when we can passionately disagree with one another and show that passionate

disagreement in a variety of ways. You know, for the party chairman and the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to bring forward these kinds of motions that really undermine the functioning of a proper Westminster Parliament like this one is really shameful. I think all of the private members who, like yourself, Mr. Speaker, are passionate about defending the operation of a Westminster parliamentary system should vote against these kinds of measures.

Mr. Speaker, with the time that I have remaining, I just want to also move on to the section about sending all private members' bills to committee. Now, as has been mentioned by all of my colleagues here who have spoken to this issue, as private members you have limited opportunity to have a direct influence on the legislation in the province of Alberta. Private members' bills are really your only way to have your voice heard and have some kind of expression on what kind of legislation you personally and your constituents want to see made here in this Chamber.

It's ironic, I guess. You know we're debating Motion 11. On the Order Paper, of course, I'd draw everybody's attention to Motion 9, which, to be clear, is not under debate, but it recognizes the right of members to vote freely on all matters of conscience. So it's proposed that all private members will be able to vote freely on matters of conscience, but when it actually comes to writing down those matters of conscience in the form of legislation in a private members' bill, tough luck. We're going to send those things to committee, where they're going to die. We're really going to silence the private members' ability to bring forward and create a meaningful expression of those matters of conscience that they were elected on and that their constituents want them to represent in the Legislature.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, it's not for me. You know, like my colleagues have said, we don't have much to lose. It's the private members of the government caucus who have the most to lose by implementing this motion. As the Member for Edmonton-West Henday said: life as a government backbencher can be incredibly quiet. You will not have a lot of say or influence over the legislation that will be brought forward, and there will be times – and I'm sure that we are already in those times – when you're incredibly disappointed with the legislation that the government has brought forward. You know, perhaps you were expecting to repeal the carbon tax, and now you're asked to vote in favour of the legislation that actually imposes a federal carbon tax on the people of Alberta. Perhaps you thought that you were going to bring jobs back to Alberta, and now you're asked to vote for corporate tax cuts that don't create jobs – the Minister of Finance has actually confirmed that – and only serve to enrich the wealthy elite, that everybody in this House seems so eager to rail against. Perhaps you thought that you were voting against red tape. Of course, now we have legislation that creates more red tape.

So, private members, stand up for your right to have your voices heard with private members' bills.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing no one, are there others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo in the time we have remaining.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will not be supporting what's before us in terms of changes to the Standing Orders. I want to focus on abstentions. I've been elected since 1995, 15 years with the city of Calgary. We voted on many things during the course of our deliberations over those 15 years, and none of those ballots had an abstention opportunity. It was either yes or no. Do you support it or not support it? Certainly, my constituents knew where I sat all the time. They knew what I said all the time because

they could look up my record, and there were people who were doing that on a regular basis.

I look across, and I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross sitting in the Legislature here. His father sat in the Legislature for more than 20 years. His father never once had the opportunity to abstain from voting. It was yes or no, yea or nay. Now I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross will be able to duck and dive and weave and essentially not be counted if he chooses to not be counted. That's not why we are elected, Mr. Speaker. Our constituents put us in this Chamber to make a difference each and every vote that comes before us. It's not parliamentary, in my view, to duck and dive and to be unclear with your constituents.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that this should be a family-friendly place. The last government put family-friendly policies in place, and now those are being changed. It will make it more unfriendly for people who have responsibilities for children, people who need to schedule those things. It will make it more difficult to

raise families. I can't think of anything we need less than to make things more difficult for women in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I know you're looking up at the clock, and I think it will probably gong pretty quickly.

I do think that these changes are not helpful. They should have gone to committee and let us as legislators decide what's in the best interests. This is heavy-handed. This is not needed. I'm disappointed at the government for bringing them forward. They shouldn't have . . .

The Speaker: Well, I hesitate to interrupt. The hon. member will have the additional time remaining, which is approximately 12 minutes, at a later time should he wish to use it.

According to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	243
Orders of the Day	243
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax.....	243
Third Reading	
Bill 1 An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax.....	246
Government Motions	
Amendments to Standing Orders.....	251

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