



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 25, 2019

Day 19

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
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,
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)
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Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
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Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 25, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead our province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon I would like to welcome back a very familiar and friendly face to the Chamber, the former Member for Calgary-Bow, Deborah Drever.

Hon. members, joining us today from the constituency of St. Albert, also in the Speaker's gallery are Olga Barceló and Henry Wearmouth.

Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, this afternoon we have, joining us from the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont, l'école Champs Vallée school. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I would like to remind all hon. members that if they have guests joining us, it is a requirement for them to be in by 11:30; however, if you're the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, perhaps a small extension will be allowed today. Joining him in the gallery are His Worship Michael Doerksen, Bart Guyon, Dan and Brenda Madlung, and Manny Deol. Please receive the warm welcome of this House.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Camrose Purple Martin Festival

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I had the pleasure of giving greetings on behalf of the Premier and the government of Alberta to the 10th annual Purple Martin Festival in Camrose. The festival is a yearly wildlife festival dedicated to learning about species of birds that live in our province, with a special focus on the purple martin. It's a type of swallow native to North and South America. Some of the highlights of this year's festival included advice on backyard birding and presentations on bird migration and the co-evolution of brood parasites and their hosts, which were respectively presented by Dr. Lu Carbyn, a retired researcher at the federal government's department of environment, and Dr. Dorothy Hill, an associate professor at Mount Royal University. The festival is a family-friendly affair, so there were some great activities for the kids: crafts, a search for aquatic invertebrates, and a presentation by the Beaverhill Bird Observatory.

Of course, who would be able to forget the main attraction, the purple martins themselves? Purple martins are a species of North

American swallow, and they're on the larger end of the sparrow species, usually reaching up to 20 centimetres in length. Now, the biggest reason for the Purple Martin Festival stems from the fact that east of the Rocky Mountains they don't nest in nests that they build themselves or cavities made by other wildlife; they nearly exclusively build their nests in birdhouses made by humans. This has led to the people of Camrose organizing the festival in order to welcome the returning purple martins as they migrate back north to Alberta. Once a year they gather as a community to build, renovate, and repair homes for these birds.

Mr. Speaker, this is such a wonderful community event, focused on helping Alberta's diverse wildlife, and, just as importantly, an event that is truly unique to Camrose. I'm honoured to have been able to attend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government and Official Opposition Policies

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend the NDP held its spring Provincial Council in Red Deer. This was an opportunity for members and delegates from across Alberta to gather together to talk about victory in 2023 and pass policy resolutions with a vision to lead this province forward. I was proud to stand with the hundreds of delegates to discuss important policy issues such as climate change, adaptation strategies, diversifying Alberta's energy sector, seniors' aging-in-place supports, and child care spaces in schools.

This is quite a contrast to what we've seen in this House from this government. During this session we've seen this government give tax giveaways to wealthy corporations while leaving school boards forced to cut millions from school budgets. We've seen this government ram through their bad-faith bargaining bill, giving themselves the power to rip up contracts of 180,000 public-sector workers. To add insult to injury, the Premier handed out earplugs during debate in a complete affront to teachers, nurses, paramedics, and more. We've seen an unprecedented attack on LGBTQ2S students with the dangerous Bill Hate, an act designed to destroy gay-straight alliances and roll back protections for students.

But there's more. The UCP's pick-your-pockets bill, Bill 2, allows employers to force workers to take banked overtime at straight time instead of time and a half, meaning that the average oil and gas worker could lose up to \$320 a week while the average construction worker could lose up to \$200 a week. What's worse is that this government limited debate on Bill 9, imposing antidemocratic restraints on this House. We now find ourselves with a government working for the few, not the many.

I am proud to stand on this side of the House as a member of the Alberta NDP, fighting in the strongest Official Opposition in the province's history. We will continue to fight for the things that matter most to Albertans: a diversified economy, high-quality health care, more and safer schools, and, without question, a steadfast respect for the rights of all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Vegreville Economic Development

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many are aware, the case processing centre in the town of Vegreville was closed down by the federal government. It's often hard for those that live in larger centres to understand the impact to a town the size of Vegreville, so I wish to comment on this.

The workers at the centre represented almost 10 per cent of the town's workforce – in perspective, losing 280 jobs in Vegreville is equivalent to losing 35,000 jobs in Edmonton – the loss of \$15 million in GDP, \$14.5 million in labour income, and \$1.2 million in municipal revenues annually.

In addition to this, there have been a significant number of residential listings due to people looking to leave town for employment. This has caused a drop in the market values of homes by approximately 25 to 30 per cent, in addition to the previous 17 per cent decrease in market values from 2014 to 2017.

The town of Vegreville will not be held down. We are working on new opportunities. The town has come up with plans to put in an industrial and commercial park. This requires infrastructure such as waterlines, sewers, roads, telecoms, and other needed amenities to attract private investment in the area.

The town is already hearing from a hemp processing company that would like to build a facility in the town as well. Construction alone will create jobs and positions at the facility once it's built. Value-added companies that produce hemp products are likely to be attracted to the area due to the close access to the hemp facility and rail lines.

The Prime Minister and his Liberal government and the previous provincial government both failed my riding when they closed down the claims processing centre without the appropriate socioeconomic consultations and consideration.

The situation is urgent, and I look forward to working with my UCP government and colleagues on a solution that can help the town of Vegreville through this difficult economic time.

Thank you.

1:40

Alberta Prosperity

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, I believe in Albertan exceptionalism. I believe that Alberta is the greatest province in Canada fundamentally because of our free-enterprise values. Albertans know from our history that excessive government is the enemy of excellence and empathy. They know that limited government is the ally of prosperity, achievement, and compassion. Alberta is exceptional because of the values that we hold dear. We believe that faith, family, and freedom must always be our guiding stars for they show us the way, and they give us hope.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, the former government's tenure will be viewed as an historical anomaly. The previous government's socialist philosophy of rule by an elite few over the many goes against Alberta's traditional principles of self-rule and representative government. In 2019 Albertans decided decisively to renew our commitment to the Albertan creed of free markets, free enterprise, and individual freedom.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta must rediscover that the key to greater economic growth, opportunity, and prosperity for all is to unbridle the energies of free enterprise. The Albertan miracle, which the rest of Canada and the world have long admired, has historically been a triumph of free people and their private institutions, not government. It has been individual workers, businesspeople, families, and religious and civil society organizations, not government, that have been primarily responsible for creating the greatest opportunity society in Canada: Alberta.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I declare the following: may we as Albertans never forget our proud origins, never fail to dream heroic dreams, and never lose our God-given optimism, always believing, as our ancestors did, that for Alberta there shall always be a bright new dawn ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

EPCOR Gold Bar Waste-water Treatment Plant

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar who banded together and formed the Save Gold Bar Park Alliance. This group formed to fight back against EPCOR's plan to expand the parking lot at the Gold Bar waste-water treatment plant into Gold Bar park, degrading the quality of the park and damaging some of the multiuse trails that many people enjoy. The good news is that last Monday the good citizens of the Save Gold Bar Park Alliance were successful in achieving their original objective when EPCOR announced that they were abandoning their plan to expand the parking lot.

The bad news is that in their work fighting the expansion of the parking lot, the alliance uncovered EPCOR's plan to expand the volume of waste water that the treatment plant would process by rerouting a planned sewage trunk line from the capital waste-water treatment plant to the Gold Bar plant. Expanding the sewage treatment plant at Gold Bar would be a mistake. The site is too close to residences and has historically had problems with emissions, that would only get worse if the volume of sewage treated were to grow significantly. Moreover, the facility may have to expand its footprint to accommodate the extra waste, putting precious river valley parkland at risk.

Building the sewage trunk line to the capital waste-water treatment plant just makes sense. It's appropriately sited far away from residential zones, and there's enough room to expand the facility to accommodate the anticipated sewage volume growth that the city expects. As the environmental regulator responsible for the plant this government should listen to the citizens of Gold Bar's objections to expanding this site.

I'm proud of the citizens of the Save Gold Bar Park Alliance. I support their work, and on their behalf I urge the members of the government to commit to refusing to grant the provincial permits needed to expand the Gold Bar waste-water treatment plant.

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

Health Care System

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Alberta's health system has enjoyed one of its most uninterrupted periods of stability under the NDP's reign": the words of Keith Gerein, health reporter and columnist with the *Edmonton Journal*. He's right. Our government gave Alberta a welcome respite from years of constant chaos overseen by Conservatives.

They spent years tinkering with our health care system with no clear focus or intention other than increasing privatization. From Premier Klein's reckless cuts, firing thousands of workers, blowing up hospitals, and musing about a third way, to Minister Liepert dissolving nine health care regions in 24 hours to create Alberta Health Services, and risky experiments with private surgery bailed out on the public dime, over 10 years Health had six ministers, none lasting a full term. AHS had six CEOs, the first a symbol of Conservative arrogance as he shunned the press in favour of eating his cookie. The board, fired by Minister Horne for refusing an impossible order, was replaced by a single administrator.

Spending, Mr. Speaker. Health spending was a roller coaster. Oil is up? Well, spending, too: 4 per cent, 6 per cent, 7 per cent. Oil is down? Time for cuts. To quote columnist Don Braid, "Staffing and programs were flatlined, resuscitated and then put through the same survival cycle again. It was chaotic for doctors, nurses and too often for patients."

Mr. Speaker, our government restored balance. As Don Braid noted, we "calmed down the system, made significant improvements

and provided stability for health planners, professionals and workers.” Stable, predictable funding, with annual growth capped at 3 per cent, increased community-focused funding for capital infrastructure, a new AHS board, and we negotiated new agreements with physicians for pay and contracts at no increased cost. Now this government seems intent on bringing chaos back: freezing spending as population grows, breaking contracts with front-line workers, cancelling needed infrastructure with no alternate plan, and promising to further privatize care.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve been down this road before. We know where it ends: higher costs, longer wait times, poorer care. Albertans deserve better, and that’s what we will fight for.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: I beg your indulgence for just moments. I neglected to recognize a group of students, student leaders who were on my list – my apologies; it was my mistake – from all across this great province of ours who have come to Edmonton to chat with members of the government and the opposition. I invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Member Ceci: I’d like to table five copies of a letter addressed to my office and the Member for Calgary-Lougheed talking about their upsetness around the Earpluggate scandal.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings this afternoon. One is a letter from one of my constituents, who refers to Earpluggate as appalling; the second one is concerned with the ramming through of Bill 9; and a third tabling is from the *Edmonton Journal* regarding Saturday’s letters. There are six letters in total that say that handing out earplugs was arrogant. I’m tabling those with the requisite number of copies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two tablings: additional letters of support for private member’s Bill 201 from the father of 12-year-old Asher in Airdrie, who suffers from serious allergies, and from a family friend of 12-year-old Asher in support of Bill 201.

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-West has a tabling.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of correspondence from a constituent who is a health care worker with AHS. She finds Bill 9 shows a deep level of disrespect for health care workers.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table today the requisite copies of three different e-mails from constituents referring to the deplorable and disrespectful action of UCP MLAs, referring to the Premier’s actions to distribute earplugs as immature, and talking about how the actions of the Premier by handing out earplugs was an affront to democracy and the traditions of the Legislature.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to rise and table the requisite number of copies in relation to a letter from a constituent who’s quite concerned about this government’s display of contempt and arrogance related to Earpluggate.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for St. Albert is rising.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of an article by Jeffrey Kluger, who is editor-at-large for *Time* magazine: Why We Keep Ignoring Even the Most Dire Climate Change Warnings.

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-West has an additional tabling?

Ms Phillips: Yes. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I have a copy of an e-mail from a constituent of Eckville, Alberta, who finds, on the actions in this House around distribution of earplugs, that it would be nice if elected officials would stop tripping over a bar that is very low.

1:50

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently, while speaking in this Chamber, I referenced a cartoon storybook I read as a young child called *Top Cat*, which I was reminded of when the Premier handed out earplugs to his caucus so they wouldn’t suffer the indignity of listening to the duly elected Official Opposition and the thousands of constituents who expect their voices to be heard and respected. I do have five copies of portions of the book to table. I did actually create a sixth copy so that the children of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, including your own, might enjoy the wonderful world of *Top Cat*.

The Speaker: I appreciate the tabling, hon. member. I think we saw a number of your colleagues display a very succinct way to table similar information. I’d encourage you to do so in the future.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Oil Transportation by Rail

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Northern Gateway: stopped in its tracks by Stephen Harper’s unwillingness to consult. Energy East: Harper’s appointees, again, botched that one. TMX: now finally approved but won’t reach tidewater for years. Those who believe Conservatives get pipelines built to tidewater need only look at the last 60 years to see that that’s not true. And now we have a Premier who’s refusing to move oil by rail for one simple reason, ideology. To the Premier: is it some sort of Conservative tradition to keep our oil away from market?

Mr. Kenney: Now, Mr. Speaker, I’ve got to admit that nothing makes me happier than having the socialists ask us about pipelines. That’s the leader of a party, half of whose caucus used to habitually attend antipipeline, anti oil and gas rallies saying: no more dirty Alberta oil. That’s the leader of a party that opposed Northern Gateway, that opposed Keystone XL, that surrendered to the Trudeau government’s killing of Energy East, surrendered to the Trudeau government’s vetoing of Northern Gateway, and did precisely nothing to protest the Obama administration’s veto of

Keystone XL. This government, however, is standing up for pipelines.

Ms Notley: Well, that was highly predictable, Mr. Speaker.

But contrary to the Premier's desire to find efficiencies with the facts, our crude-by-rail plan would have given Albertans a \$2 billion profit, more takeaway capacity, and more jobs, starting next week. We know line 3 and KXL are delayed, and even with TMX we risk extended curtailment and more jobs lost. To the Premier. This Monday our rail plan would have moved tens of thousands of barrels. Instead, we will move zero. Can you tell Albertans just how many jobs you sacrificed for politics?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, they haven't learned a thing. They signed a desperate last-minute deal, that sold Alberta taxpayers down the river, to do what? To buy a headline, to do something that the private sector was perfectly prepared to do itself at its expense. The NDP, because they've always opposed our energy industry – that's really been their *raison d'être* in modern Alberta political history, to oppose what they've always called the corrosive influence of, quote, big oil in Alberta politics. We, on the other hand, understand the integral role that industry plays in our province's economy and in our prosperity.

Ms Notley: Well, I'm not surprised that the Premier wants to continue to tell tales and, more importantly, to deflect, because he has no answer, Mr. Speaker. He's caught between his ridiculous campaign promise to rip up the oil-by-rail contract on the one hand and protecting jobs on the other. Now, perhaps a few tweets from his energy war room will create some jobs, but I doubt it. To the Premier: if you won't move oil by rail, how will you do it? Send it in airplanes? Drive it to the coast in your big blue truck? Albertans deserve more than talking points, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: They certainly do, Mr. Speaker, which is why Albertans gave this government the largest democratic mandate in history to undo the massive damage done to our jobs and prosperity by the high-tax, reckless policies of the NDP. Their surrender, their actual asking of the federal government to veto Northern Gateway, is part of what created this situation. I'll tell you. On crude by rail, we know and believe that more oil should be moved by rail at the risk and cost of the private sector, not by costing taxpayers billions of dollars we can't afford.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

Ms Notley: Clearly, the Premier is more interested in political talking points than the facts or getting the job done when it comes to education.

Education Funding

Ms Notley: So let's turn to another file they're bungling, education. Now, it's been over two weeks since the Minister of Finance claimed that enrolment would be funded, but school boards that we spoke to as recently as this morning say that they've received nothing in writing. To the Premier: what's the problem here? Are your ministers of Finance and Education still fighting over who's in charge, or are they just unable to connect the printer, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, our commitment on education funding is absolutely clear. In the campaign we committed to maintaining or increasing funding levels for education. We have since confirmed that there will be an increase in funding for enrolment

growth in the upcoming school year. Of course, the minister is communicating with stakeholders, including school boards. I'll tell you one thing: if we had allowed the NDP a chance to drive us to a \$100 billion debt, that's really what would jeopardize the future of funding high-quality public education.

Ms Notley: Back to the topic at hand, Mr. Speaker, I have a document I've mentioned which I will table today. It's one example of the standard notice that is sent out to boards, typically in April. It includes helpful bits of information like the exact projected enrolment, specific base funding for early childhood, grades 1 to 9, and high school. It also includes specific grants for things like ESL, inclusive education, and school nutrition. To the Premier: to date no board has received this critical information. Why is his minister failing to do her job?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education is doing a fantastic job balancing the need to provide adequate support for what is one of the most expensive public education systems in Canada while also working with school boards and in the future ensuring that we can do all of this within the bounds of fiscal responsibility. In April there was an election. This government has had eight weeks to get on top of the fiscal mess left behind by the NDP. The minister is communicating with school boards, and there is certainty that they will receive enrolment growth funding for the upcoming year.

Ms Notley: Once again, Mr. Speaker, on the question of the minister's competence, the Premier is economizing on the facts. School boards should not have to rely on reading answers in question period to learn about next year's funding. This minister's incompetence means that positions are currently being cut, hiring is delayed, and kids' education is hurt, yet it persists. To the Premier: is the real problem here that the enrolment funding promise is as reliable as this Premier's word on legislating social issues, cutting overtime, ripping up contracts, or earplugs?

Mr. Kenney: The real problem here, Mr. Speaker, is an NDP that's angry with Alberta voters for repudiating them. You know, I see here an interview that the Leader of the Opposition did with the *National Post* a couple of days ago, in which she is queried about what mistakes the NDP may have made that led to their historic repudiation as the first and only ever one-term government in Alberta history. [interjection] You know what? The leader of the NDP, who is impolitely heckling me, could not identify a single mistake made by the NDP, proving that they still haven't learned their lesson. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. We will have order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Holiday Pay and the Minimum Wage for Youth

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Charles Dickens wrote, "For it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas." But then Dickens didn't live in the UCP's Alberta, where mom and dad could be made to work the holiday without any extra compensation or time off. And the children will be working, too, but for less money than the adults doing the exact same job. To the Premier. Your proposed reforms to Alberta's labour laws will only make life harder for Alberta families. Why are you being such a Scrooge?

Mr. Kenney: Well, it didn't take long, Mr. Speaker, for the NDP smear machine to accuse us of creating a Dickensian society here. You know what? If the NDP had a tiny patina of humility, they

would stand up and acknowledge and apologize for the reckless economic policies that left nearly 200,000 Albertans jobless, that drove down average family incomes by 6 per cent, that shrunk our economy by 4 per cent over four years. They would apologize for the worst economic and fiscal record in Alberta history.

2:00

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

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The UCP treat the first half of Dickens' novel *A Christmas Carol* like a how-to guide on labour policy. They're stripping Albertans of holiday pay and youth of fair wages. To the Premier: won't you acknowledge that stealing holidays and fair youth wages is just greedy and will do little to improve the economy? Do we really want to wait and see if Ebenezer's ghost comes knocking on your door?

Mr. Kenney: I will acknowledge that none of that is even remotely true, Mr. Speaker. I will acknowledge that this government was elected with a historic mandate to get Alberta back to work and to undo the deep damage caused by reckless NDP economic and tax policies. That's exactly what we're doing. The NDP was perfectly satisfied to drive tens of thousands of young people out of work, moving from the minimum wage to no wage. [interjections] We're more ambitious for our young people. We want them to find that first job that can help prepare them for a lifetime of success. That's why we're focused on job creation for Albertans, especially young Albertans.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will have order when the government is answering questions.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, *A Christmas Carol* was fiction, but this Premier's plans for causing working Albertans pain are very real. Today I was proud to stand with three of many businesses who've stood up for fair wages for our youth, and I know there are many businesses who will continue to actually provide holiday pay. To the Premier. This really is your last chance. Will you put a halt to gutting youth wages? Do you really want the damage caused by your picking the pockets of youth workers to be something that haunts you for a long, long time?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, you would think that after their repudiation by Alberta voters the NDP would be haunted – haunted – by the 30,000 young Albertans looking for work who cannot find jobs; haunted by the fact that the youth unemployment rate is twice as high as the general unemployment rate; haunted by the fact that they drove us to the highest level of unemployment in Canada for most of their mandate. But we're going to exercise the ghosts of bad economic policy by the NDP by getting Albertans back to work with our job-creation tax cut, our youth job-creation strategy, and our cutting red tape. We're going to get Alberta back on track.

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

Medical Laboratory Services in Edmonton

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Repeatedly the Minister of Health has stood in this House and claimed that I was misrepresenting the Health Quality Council of Alberta in stating that they support a new consolidated clinical lab hub for Edmonton and northern Alberta. Well, last week Andrew Neuner, CEO of the HQCA, spoke with CBC and told them that the evidence supporting the need for a superlab in Edmonton still stands. To the minister:

there it is, straight from the HQCA. Will you now admit you've been getting it wrong, or will you simply put in your earplugs and double down on your short-sighted campaign promise?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, it's time for the NDP to start being honest with Albertans about what those two reports from the Health Quality Council actually say. There is in those reports information that says that we do need to invest in lab infrastructure here in Alberta, something they failed to do because they were waiting. They were ragging the puck so they could use that opportunity to try and nationalize private partners in health care. It's a shame that they tried to do that. It's a shame that they're not being honest with Albertans about what's said in those reports. They never said to have a megalab to try and replace private partners and, honestly, to remove jobs from the member's own riding.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quotes from the CEO. Mr. Neuner went on to say that their recommendation to bring lab services under a single public-sector platform is still valid and that he respects the government's need to balance priorities and funding but that it doesn't change the evidence. He pointed to outdated equipment, inconsistent information systems, and reporting protocols and said that consolidating lab services would increase efficiency, allow for faster test results, and provide better control over public policy. To the minister. The need is clear; the solution is, too. Why do you insist that you know better than the HQCA?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, again we see the NDP failing to be honest with Albertans with what's in that report. Again we see the NDP misrepresenting facts to Albertans about the state of affairs here in health care in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, the two reports – there are two of them – of the HQCA never said to replace private partners in health care with this megalab. It never said to have it on that spot, on that site, with that size of laboratory infrastructure. It's time for the NDP to start being honest with Albertans with what's in that report.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am quoting the CEO of the HQCA.

Now, yesterday morning on Danielle Smith's radio show the minister stated that he doesn't know why the Health Sciences Association of Alberta disagrees with his decision to cancel the lab hub, that he believes they're not considering the best interest of patients. Now, I've had conversations, perhaps unlike the minister, with lab technicians and technologists who have repeatedly expressed concern that outdated equipment and facilities are jeopardizing patient care. To the minister: are you really trying to suggest that front-line health care workers don't care about patients? Why would you make such a ridiculous and disruptive claim?

Mr. Shandro: Again we see the NDP, actually, Mr. Speaker, admitting to Albertans that throughout their four years they did not invest in lab infrastructure in this province. They rag the puck to be able to try and use this as an opportunity to nationalize DynaLife. It's a shame. That's not what we're going to do. We're going to do what's in the best interests of patients.

The Speaker: The Member for Livingstone-Macleod is rising to ask a question.

Electricity Market Review

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Historically Alberta's competitive market for electricity has kept prices low and encouraged investment. However, the previous government has made costly changes to the system, costing taxpayers and consumers billions of dollars. For decades Alberta's competitive market for electricity encouraged investment. We need a system that will encourage investment but will still meet the best interests of Albertans. My constituents were deeply concerned to hear about all of the problems and particularly the costs associated with these contracts. Albertans expect better from their leaders. Can the minister tell us how much the Alberta . . .

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's ideological meddling with the electricity system cost our province, taxpayers, and consumers nearly \$2 billion. The PPA contracts, the power purchase contracts, that were in place prior to 2015 had a clause that allowed electricity generators to get out of the contract if the government changed the rules to their detriment, which the NDP did, and that led to a multibillion-dollar mishandling of the electricity sector.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a sustainable solution is desperately needed and given that this solution comes in the form of a long-term viable market for all Albertans and given that our United Conservative government was elected on a strong mandate from Albertans to once again make Alberta open for business, to the minister: what further actions need to be taken to correct the mistakes of the previous government to ensure that Albertans are getting fair prices and not paying for these mistakes with their tax dollars?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's mishandling of the electricity system involved cancellation of contracts, court cases, bungling and mishandling of the return of the contracts, higher electricity costs, subsidies, resignation of the entire Balancing Pool. We have an election campaign platform commitment of a 90-day review of the capacity market, which we launched two weeks ago, and with that, we are going to ask Albertans the best way forward.

Mr. Reid: Given that the renewable energy program is now a series of costly subsidies that Albertans are now paying the price for and given that our United Conservative government campaigned on the promise to ensure that Alberta's electricity market is fair and affordable and given that our government will always do what is in the best interest of Albertans, to the minister: can you update my constituents on what steps you are taking to address the previous policies that may not be in the best interest of Albertans?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, our election platform was clear that we would end costly subsidies after the renewable energy program, round 3. Last week I sent a letter to the AESO informing them that we will not be proceeding with REP 4. We are in favour and we welcome market-driven solutions for renewables like wind, solar, and hydro, but they must be able to compete on a market basis.

2:10

Solar Energy Use

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, our NDP government was proud to provide incentives to bring investment to the renewable energy sector that didn't cost taxpayers any money at the industrial scale. Included among those was the residential and commercial solar programs, which offered rebates on installation costs for homes and

business solar projects and led to our solar industry growing by an incredible 500 per cent. But now it seems that the sun is setting on solar in Alberta, with this government cancelling the program. To the minister: if you're so intent on bringing investment to this province, why are you cancelling the very program that does just that?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, subsidies that didn't cost the taxpayers any money? It just shows that the NDP continue to not understand what has gone wrong and why they are the only one-term government in the history of this province. They brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province, the carbon tax, which I'm proud this government has now gotten rid of. They brought in nothing but economic pain and no environmental gain for the people of this province. Again, to the hon. members, it's time to examine what has gone wrong and what they did wrong and apologize to Albertans for it.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, our solar rebate program was so popular that even Andrew Scheer agrees with it.

Given that these jobs are now stalled, with the president of Great Canadian Solar telling CBC last week, quote: we can't look at hiring right now, whether it's engineering, installation, sales, support staff – what happens to those jobs? To the minister: what is happening to those jobs? Are you so intent on cancelling every initiative that our government started that you're willing to throw people out of work just to make a point?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody in this government will be lectured to by that hon. member about jobs when he was part of a government that oversaw something like 200,000 people being out of work in this province.

In regard to Andrew Scheer, I'm happy to report that our colleagues federally in the CPC also have a climate change policy that does not include a carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, because they recognize that a carbon tax is all economic pain and no environmental gain. [interjections] I understand that the NDP, as they heckle me right now, are still struggling to understand why Albertans are so angry with them, but they fired them on April 16.

Mr. Schmidt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that Canadians are embracing solar energy, Canadians like Andrew Scheer, with solar panels popping up on homes and businesses across the province and given that the town of Raymond has put solar panels on almost all municipally owned buildings and is the first town in Canada, possibly North America, to be electrically net zero, will the minister admit that the province of Alberta is behind the times when it comes to solar energy?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government has no concerns with solar energy; in fact, we encourage people to look at solar options. What the difference is between this government and the previous NDP government is that we're not going to use taxpayers' dollars to subsidize the solar industry. [interjection]

I know I can hear the former Premier heckling right now because she's extraordinarily frustrated because Albertans fired her on April 16 largely because they brought in a carbon tax, which was all economic pain and no environmental gain and disproportionately punished people like fixed-income seniors and the vulnerable, homeless shelters, food banks, and on and on, Mr. Speaker. So very disappointing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Technology and Entrepreneurship Educational Curricula

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The world is changing, and we need to change with it to maintain our competitive advantage. Alberta is ranked third in the world for artificial intelligence and machine learning, and we have a vibrant and diverse tech sector. To attract investment, we need to make sure that Alberta is home to a highly skilled and technologically literate workforce. To the Minister of Education: how exactly does your needless delay on a new Alberta curriculum help prepare our students for these high-tech jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very important that as we look to the future, it's a priority for us to ensure that we have a skilled and educated workforce that will help us meet the demands of a fast-paced and changing environment. We recognize this as a priority, and within the Ministry of Advanced Education we'll be looking to expand the apprenticeship model of education and have that applied to areas such as coding and green technologies, areas and industries that are in demand, so that we can ensure that we are ahead of the curve in ensuring that we have the labour force that we need.

Mr. Dang: That has nothing to do with IT. Zero.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think everyone can hear you in the middle of a question when the Speaker is on his feet.

I might just ask all members to keep their comments to themselves.

Mr. Bilous: Hopefully, everyone had their plugs in. That might have been clocked at 101 decibels, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the curriculum needs to include coding, entrepreneurship, and foundational skills so students will be able to compete for technology jobs and given that students need to start learning these skills now, not years from now, and given that Alberta's postsecondary institutions are at the leading edge of graduating students ready to make their mark in digital industries, to the Minister of Education: will the minister commit to ensuring that coding and entrepreneurship are added immediately to the curriculum, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education is rising.

Mr. Nicolaides: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, looking at applying the apprenticeship model, specifically in areas of coding, is something that our government is working towards. We're also working to ensure that we can get more students from the K to 12 curriculum to pursue vocational educational opportunities and help them to enter the skilled trades. That includes looking at building NAIT collegiate to foster a labour force that will help us address the labour demands not just of today but of tomorrow. Our government is being proactive, and we're taking steps to ensure that that'll be done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start off by saying that this is going to the Minister of Education. Given that some of Alberta's curriculum is over 30 years old and given that industry players do not need to wait for our classrooms to catch up to their workforce needs when they can simply move to other labour markets, to the Minister of Education: given that the Premier himself promised during the recent election that his education

platform would create, quote, a workforce that's ready for the future – forgive me. This is to the Premier: does your workforce for the future involve Commodore 64s?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education has risen.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's incredibly important that we evaluate, of course, the labour market needs and impacts of degree programs and of educational opportunities. We recognize that that's important. We want to ensure that when our students are moving through K to 12 and entering into postsecondary, they have a good sense and a good understanding of what the labour market needs are and what the labour market impacts are of the programs that they're seeking to enter. We believe it's important to provide that information and clarity to our students.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Driver's Licence Road Tests

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some time has passed now, giving our ministers time to settle into their new roles. The previous government made significant changes to the scheduling of road tests. Rural communities such as mine in the Camrose constituency are particularly negatively impacted as scheduled testers do not honour their scheduled appointments, leaving those who have scheduled their drivers' tests in a situation where they have taken time off work for the appointment. Many also drive long distances. Can the Minister of Transportation please give this House an update on the status of this inefficient system?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct. On March 1 of this year the NDP government blew up the driver examiner system at the start of the busiest time of the year. That's why we're working quickly to clean up the mess the NDP left in this file. We've hired extra examiners. There are more than 140 on the job now. By the end of this week there should be over 150, which puts us essentially at full strength. We're working hard. I encourage Albertans to keep calling to get their tests. We'll start catching up now that we have re-created the labour force to do this.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you so much, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans are not able to take scheduled road tests, will the minister consider returning to the previous system whereby local testers are scheduled, returning to a more efficient privatized system whereby travel of testers does not cut into time which can be better used testing rather than driving to or from testing destinations?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

2:20

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that the previous government rushed the implementation of this system, causing months of delays during the peak season. To answer the question, we will not redisrupt the market in the middle of the main part of the season. We'll be speaking now with the driver examiners, registries, and other stakeholders to determine next steps. In the meantime, our focus is on clearing the NDP backlog and ensuring that Albertans have timely access to the current system, which the NDP messed up on March 1.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. My final question is to the same minister. Given that residents who live in my constituency of Camrose have expressed concern regarding the inefficiencies in our revised system, can you please explain to this House what Albertans can expect from this newly elected government as it pertains to scheduling road tests?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government will do our best to keep cleaning up the mess the NDP has caused on this file. We're working quickly to ensure that the applicants have timely and reliable access to drivers' exams. As I said, we've hired extra examiners and added weekends and Saturday bookings to help clear the backlog. By mid-July Albertans should be able to book a test as much as 90 days in advance and, equally important, they shouldn't have to wait as long to get the test if they're in a hurry. Every class of licence was in a mess. We're cleaning it up, and it's taking some time.

Minister of Finance

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, Albertans expect public policy to be developed in a manner that adheres to conflict-of-interest legislation, so why is the Minister of Finance listed as a director of a corporation that provides "oversight for the ministry" of the Peace River Bible Institute?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to answer that question, I resigned as a director earlier this year. I think what I really want to say is that I ensured that I resigned.

Albertans elected this government to clean the mess up that the previous government made. The previous government was taking this province on a track to \$100 billion of debt. Albertans said no to that and yes to responsible government. That's what we're here to do, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Phillips: Given that if this is the case, the minister should have no problem tabling this evidence by the end of question period today and given that the Conflicts of Interest Act specifically cautions against the appearance of impropriety, why does it appear that the minister is breaking the conflict-of-interest laws in order to further a private interest as a director for a corporation?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I have cleared everything with the Ethics Commissioner.

What the members opposite are struggling with is that on April 16 Albertans said: "We need a change. We need a government who will stand up for our interests. We need a government who will make responsible decisions to ensure that this generation and the next generation have a future." Mr. Speaker, that's what this government is about, and we will deliver to Albertans.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, given that the Conflicts of Interest Act specifically prohibits ministers from being part of decisions affecting organizations or avoiding the appearance of being part of decisions affecting organizations that they are directly associated with, is it government policy to appear to blatantly disregard the guidance of the conflict-of-interest legislation? Why the oversight?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. the Finance minister was clear on this. He's resigned from that position and, like all of us, has been through a process with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure he's completely in compliance with his role as the Finance minister of Alberta.

What is ridiculous is that member continuing with that line of attack even after it was confirmed by the Finance minister that he resigned from that position. It's shameful. Now, it doesn't surprise me, coming from that particular member, whose role when she was the environment minister was not to consult with Albertans, was to basically go out of her way to cause trouble inside of our communities, refused to meet with the very people that they did, and even went out of her way to lie about the RCMP.

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:24.

Conversion Therapy Use in Alberta

Member Irwin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Lethbridge-West for raising some additional troubling information about this Minister of Finance. Sadly, there's more. This government has already refused to take conversion therapy seriously. The Minister of Health has disbanded the working group tasked with banning this harmful practice. Thankfully, my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs is carrying the work forward. To the Minister of Finance: are you familiar with the organization Journey Canada and its connections to conversion therapy?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's so sad to see the NDP in opposition continue to go out of their way with fear and smear and to waste their constituents' time inside this place. [interjections] It is so disappointing. You can see right now the behaviour of the NDP, the former Premier of Alberta heckling away in a very childish way inside this place. Albertans find that unacceptable. I suspect that's why they fired them on April 16. While I recognize that the hon. leader of the NDP is frustrated that she was fired, that's the reality. Albertans cast that judgment. If they keep doing it this way, they'll cast it again, I'm sure.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister is listed publicly as a member of the board that thrice published a newsletter featuring the minister that contained an ad for a Journey Canada event called the church and same-sex attraction and given that the description of this event is aimed at "equipping . . . friends and caregivers to walk with those who are experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction," to the minister: to what extent are your policy choices informed by antigay organizations that want to pray the gay away or much, much worse?

Mr. Jason Nixon: The behaviour by the Official Opposition in this place is appalling. This may be the worst Official Opposition in history by this point. It is unbelievable. You know, it's interesting, when I was back home in my constituency this weekend, how many people came and talked to me about the behaviour of the NDP. I can tell you that everyday Albertans are extremely frustrated with how their Official Opposition is acting in this place. They're shocked by it. You see it over and over. I know that you must be frustrated by it, Mr. Speaker. It's ridiculous. The fear and smear should stop. Certainly, Team Angry should stop, and they should accept the judgment of Albertans.

Member Irwin: Given that conversion therapy is dangerous and that it ruins lives, no matter what the ministers and this government say, and given that being gay doesn't make you a demon, not to my knowledge anyway – neither does yoga, for that matter – and given that the UCP ran another candidate in this past election that had direct ties to Journey Canada and its harmful conversion therapy practices, will the minister stand in this House and apologize for his past views, and if not, will he recuse himself from any discussion in this House or in cabinet relating to conversion therapy?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, who should apologize in this House is the Official Opposition. They should apologize for the way that they have approached their job. It's disappointing. It does a disservice to Albertans. It's ridiculous. It's completely inappropriate, what you've seen . . .

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

Mr. Jason Nixon: . . . taking place here, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] You see it right now, heckling away, language that would be inappropriate anywhere else. These are the things that Albertans are disappointed in. This is why the NDP is the only one-term government in the history of this province. They can do better. I encourage them to do better, but sadly it looks like they have no intention of doing that. Instead, they're going to attempt to bully people and go out of their way to act like this in this House. It's shameful.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order noted at 2:29.

Agricultural Education

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, southern Alberta was one of the early hubs of agriculture in the province and has always been a leader in ag production, innovation, and education, especially in my constituency of Cardston-Siksika. Most recently Magrath high school developed a partnership with the Westwind school district and several local producers to create the sustainable agriculture education partnership in an effort to bring agriculture literacy to our students. To the minister: how do you intend to replicate programs that inspire students to think about their futures such as the one in Magrath?

Member LaGrange: I'm very glad to hear success stories like this, where a school district is taking advantage of the career and technology programs offered within our world-class education system. Programs like career and technology studies, dual credit, and off-campus learning encourage partnerships within the community and are wonderful learning opportunities for our students. These programs allow students to develop job-ready skills and address labour market needs within a local context. I'd like to congratulate Westwind school district, Magrath, and Cardston on their partnership.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for the answer. Now, this program doesn't end there. Given that Wade Alston, the CAO of the town of Magrath, stated to the media that the enrolment in this program is strong and given that he foresees an expansion of this program to other regions, including partnerships with the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College, and given that these types of programs have proven effective in other countries around the world, how will the minister

assist in the expansion of these kinds of programs, and how will the minister roll this program out?

2:30

Member LaGrange: Thank you for that question, hon. member. We encourage growth within all our career and technology programs. School authorities have the flexibility to identify opportunities for growth of these programs within their communities. I would also like to encourage schools to take advantage of the flexibility inherent in programs like career and technology studies and dual credit and to participate in the amazing opportunities available through Skills Alberta. We are always listening to our school authorities and industry partners, and we will always support opportunities that enrich the lives of our students, their families, and their communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's agriculture and agrifood industries are an underappreciated sector in our economy and given that the agriculture and agrifood industries are rapidly expanding while employment in the sector dissipates and given that youth in Alberta are taking on tens of thousands of dollars in debt each year, facing a nearly 10 per cent unemployment rate and minimal prospects of well-paying jobs after graduating, what will this minister do to empower partnerships that show students the career options available to them like the ones in Magrath?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government was elected on the promise to improve access to career and technology programs for students across the province. In addition to funding programs through Skills Alberta and Careers: the Next Generation, I know that a number of school divisions, including Westwind school division, will be developing additional dual-credit opportunities this fall thanks to this government's commitment to education. Alberta's dual-credit program has been well received, and we will be looking at building on this program this fall.

Thank you.

Payday Loan Consumer Protection

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I asked the Minister of Service Alberta if he was prepared to commit to protecting the consumer protection laws that our government brought in around the automotive industry. His response was less than encouraging. So let's try again and give this minister another chance to show Albertans that he's in it for them and not just for UCP donors. To the Minister of Service Alberta: do you support the payday loan legislation introduced by our government in the previous Legislature? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Our government is monitoring the impact of this current legislation. We know that when Albertans are not working and are paying too much in taxes, the need for short-term credit increases. That's why our government is putting forward legislation that will help job creators to create jobs so that Albertans can get back to work. Alberta succeeds when individual Albertans succeed, and we are committed to doing what we can to ensure conditions for success are in place.

Mr. Carson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that our government acted on payday loans by bringing in the lowest borrowing rate in Canada and given that our government acted by lowering the annual interest rates and gave borrowers the right to pay back their loans in instalments over two months and given that affirming support for common-sense regulations like this should be the simplest thing for the minister to do, again to the Minister of Service Alberta: has the minister or any member of his staff had any meetings with any lobbyist representing the payday loan industry, seeking to roll back our legislation on payday loans?

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, this is a clear case of the member opposite trying to create a problem where there isn't one. The Alberta Lobbyists Act requires that lobbying activities be registered and that that information is publicly available. We are committed to protecting and creating the conditions for Albertans to have success and to be protected and to balancing the needs of consumers and business and also to ensuring that we are creating jobs and attracting investment to this province. Albertans voted overwhelmingly for the vision that we put forward, and we are committed to following through on our commitments to Albertans.

Mr. Carson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that high-interest payday loans keep low-income Albertans in the cycle of poverty and given that it's an important responsibility of the government to protect Albertans from predatory businesses, to the Minister of Service Alberta: will you commit here and now to not taking any action that would allow predatory payday loan providers to regain ground in this province?

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is that licences for those providing payday loans or high-cost credit loans are obtained under the Consumer Protection Act, and it is important to note that my department conducts inspections and will investigate complaints that it receives. Albertans know that we have their best interests at heart when it comes to helping them earn a living and to keeping more money in their pockets. That's why they voted overwhelmingly for change in this last election, and I'll remind all Albertans that we are working hard to deliver on that change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for St. Albert.

PDD Program Applications

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the persons with developmental disabilities program received over 2,000 applications for support to enable Albertans who meet the criteria to live and work in their communities. Requests for new services are sometimes due to aging of people or the onset of dementia, severe illness, or a changing living situation. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: has your department developed a new funding approval process for PDD applicants, and if so, what criteria is being applied, and will you share that criteria with Albertans?

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Mr. Speaker, it was part of our platform commitment that we were going to review the PDD program, and certainly we are taking steps right now to go through that program in depth and to determine what the next steps are going to be.

Ms Renaud: Actually, the review is already under way.

Given that approximately 200 youth transition from FSCD, family support for children with disabilities, funding to PDD

funding for adults with developmental disabilities each year, can the Minister of Community and Social Services confirm that the intake and approval process has not been altered with the addition of bureaucratic layers to lengthen the approval and appeal timeline?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, while that program has been reviewed, it hasn't been reviewed sufficiently at this point. That transition period from FSCD to the PDD program is very problematic. Certainly, the previous government had four years to fix that issue, and they didn't.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Given the fact that the average wait time for someone approved for PDD funding is approximately 377 days and given the fact that wait-lists range in number from 60 to 300, can the Minister of Community and Social Services assure Albertans whose lives and well-being rely on essential supports that eligible applicants will not be deferred because there is no funding or the funding is too stretched to be available?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, the wait-list issue was already in existence during the previous government's tenure. It continues to be a problem, and we're looking at that problem right now to try to see how we can address it efficiently.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Red Tape Reduction Strategy

Mrs. Allard: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When red tape comes up, the focus seems to be more on business, in particular on reducing the regulatory burden for businesses, investment, and industry. However, I hear from many constituents in my riding who are not necessarily businesspeople, and they, too, have red tape concerns. Along with these concerns many have creative solutions to bring to the table. To the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: we know that you're easing the regulatory burden on job creators, but how can other Albertans participate as well?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. All Albertans are encouraged to submit their red tape concerns to make life better for Albertans. Red tape reduction ideas can be submitted to our newly launched website, cutredtape.alberta.ca, or sent by e-mail to cutredtape@gov.ab.ca. To show how excited Albertans are about this initiative, in less than 24 hours we've already received 800 submissions. If you see red tape, we're all ears.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that as an MLA I frequently hear of processes that can be sped up, inefficiencies to be fixed, and redundancies plaguing job creators, how can the businesses in my riding let you know what the actual key challenges and holdups are on the ground?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, for far too long our job creators have been told that they're greedy and that they don't care about their employees. This has been especially true over the past four years under the NDP. What's ironic is that after treating them this way, the NDP would ask them to create jobs and grow the economy. We're going to do things differently. We're going to reduce the

layers of red tape heaped upon their backs, allowing them to do what they do best, create jobs. We are going to provide them multiple vehicles to submit their ideas through panels and an open-door policy with this government.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that your ministry is an associate ministry, which results in fewer resources and limited manpower, to the same minister: how will you extend your red tape reduction efforts to ensure that you accomplish your mandate for the people of Alberta?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, we have made sure that our associate ministry is lean yet effective. We have reallocated resources from the Ministry of Finance in order to deliver a competent team in order to meet our goal of reducing red tape by one-third. We'll also have MLAs supporting us as they move individual submissions through to completion. One final point: we have complete support from the Premier and all ministers to be able to accomplish this great work.

Rural Crime Strategy

Mr. Loewen: Rural crime remains an important issue for my constituents in Central Peace-Notley, and I know it is for many of the MLAs on this side of the Chamber. The safety of all Albertans should be a priority for any government. Unfortunately, very few of the NDP MLAs were from rural constituencies in the previous government. Therefore, they allocated insufficient resources and didn't devote any real energy to the issue of rural crime. My question is for the Minister of Justice: can the minister please tell us here today what this government's strategy is regarding the important issue of rural crime?

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

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. member for his continued advocacy on this important issue facing so many of our rural communities and his advocacy for the Peace Country. Our government is committed to implementing our rural crime strategy, that we outlined in our campaign. On a regular basis I'm talking with our police, our chief judges, to make sure that we're on top of the challenges in our court system as well as on the ground in our communities. I can also let the Assembly know that last week I sent a letter in support of Conservative member Blaine Calkins' proposed amendment to the Criminal Code to strengthen provisions relating to rural crime.

Mr. Loewen: Given that rural crime was not a priority for the previous government even though rural crime affects so many Albertans and given that this government's platform included robust rural crime policies because the issue of rural crime is such a serious safety and property issue and given that Albertans' priorities are this government's priorities, can the minister tell this Chamber if continuing and further consultations have been carried out with Albertans about a rural crime policy?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend all of the members of our rural caucus that on a regular basis come to me, meet with me, bring issues forward. We're in the process right now of engaging with our MLAs, engaging with our ministry, to go out across Alberta over the summer and into the fall to consult and hear directly from communities regarding the challenges that they face. We want to listen. We want to make sure that we address these

issues and make sure that all communities know about the resources that are going to be made available to them.

Mr. Loewen: Given that crime is a pressing issue for Alberta's rural constituencies because of the great distances from law enforcement that residents find themselves in, resulting in longer response times, and given that in my constituency new crime watch groups have started to fight rural crime and given that having safe rural communities benefits all Albertans, can the minister please inform this House what resources will be allocated to help fight rural crime for the benefit of all Albertans?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, all Albertans deserve to feel safe in their communities and their homes. Our government has been clear that we're going to make sure that we provide our law enforcement officials with the resources that they need, from hiring 50 new prosecutors to providing ALERT with \$50 million to combat the opioid crisis facing our province as well as making sure that they have the resources to tackle gang violence. Our priorities are clear. We're going to make sure we provide our police and prosecutors with the resources that they need. Our priorities are not providing free light bulbs and shower heads.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to tabling of returns and reports.

Tabling Returns and Reports (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies from the Peace River Bible Institute website that were downloaded today indicating that the Minister of Finance forms the corporation of the Peace River Bible Institute.

I also have, Mr. Speaker, a letter from a constituent of Lethbridge-West who is a teacher, from both her and her husband, who is also a teacher, thanking the opposition for their work on Bill 9 and registering their firm opposition to getting in the way of collective bargaining.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition a document that she referenced as far as school districts normally getting their budgets in March/April.

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen to table a document.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table today, with the requisite number of copies. First, at the disbelieving urging from the Member for Morinville-St. Albert, an article, which I believe I saw through a tweet, which is titled Brazil President: I'd Rather Have a Dead Son than a Gay Son. Imagine that, an elected official.

I also have an article about a dad accused of murder, who, once he found out his son had a boyfriend, grabbed a gun and shot him.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Education, pursuant to the

Teaching Profession Act the Alberta Teachers' Association 2018 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order.

The first point of order was raised by the Official Opposition House Leader. However, I am not in need of his interjections. What I am in need of is not the continuation of debate. The Government House Leader knows what he did, and he will withdraw and apologize.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: Point of order 2, I believe, was raised by the Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In question period today I think we all heard this because it was shouted out so clearly and audibly. The Member for St. Albert shouted out: your arrogance is appalling. Now, of course, I think that would fall under 23(h), (i), and (j), probably all three of them. You know, we put up with a lot of abuse in this House from the members from the opposition side shouting out different things throughout question period, and I would suggest that that member should apologize and withdraw her remarks.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, what I will say is that it's pretty rich coming from the member who sat as opposition when we were government and hurled insults every day during question period for the full 35 seconds while ministers were responding. You know what? If the member said that – I mean, the government is acting very arrogantly, but it's not a point of order. It's a difference of opinion. It was a heckle that clearly was an effective heckle if it bothered the member. But I can tell you that it's not a point of order; it's a difference of opinion. I will not be apologizing or withdrawing that comment.

The Speaker: Well, you may have to, depending on the ruling of the chair, so I would perhaps suggest that you take a different tack when finishing your points of order.

Having said that, as all members of the Assembly will know, it would be impossible for a chair to rule on comments that they may or may not have heard that are not on the record. While it is quite possible that the Member for St. Albert did in fact say that, I myself at that time was intently trying to listen to the question and the answer, the cut and thrust of debate, and everyone will know that in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 624, it is well accepted that "the Chair cannot be expected to rule in the absence of a reliable record." So in this case I would consider it not to be a point of order. Of course, all members are responsible for decorum inside this Chamber.

Having said that, the chair is prepared to rule on the point of privilege.

Privilege Misleading the House

The Speaker: Hon. members, I am prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised yesterday, June 24, 2019, by the Official Opposition House Leader relating to comments made by the

Government House Leader and Minister of Environment and Parks on June 20, 2019.

2:50

The Official Opposition House Leader provided notice to my office at 11:25 yesterday morning of this question of privilege, with a copy to the Government House Leader, and therefore met the requirements under Standing Order 15(2). I might provide some guidance to the Official Opposition House Leader that it is customary to outline in some detail what the purpose of the point of privilege shall be. In this particular case, the letter was vague at best.

As stated in his arguments yesterday afternoon at pages 1113 and 1114 of *Hansard*, the Official Opposition House Leader alleges that the Government House Leader made – and this is the important part – deliberately misleading statements to the Assembly on June 20, 2019, and that these statements constitute a contempt of the Assembly. The statements in question are found on pages 1079 and 1080 of *Hansard* from June 20 and were made during Oral Question Period by the Government House Leader in response to questions from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. The primary issue raised by the House leader for the Official Opposition was with respect to the Government House Leader's answer to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora's second supplemental question, which can be found on page 1080 of *Hansard*. The Government House Leader said, "Mr. Speaker, nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate."

The test for deliberately misleading the House can be found in the fourth edition of *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, pages 775 and 776. The test has three elements. "The statement must, in fact, have been misleading; the member must have known that the statement was inaccurate at the time [in which] the statement was made; and the member must have intended to mislead the House." As Speaker Wanner, my predecessor, noted on March 22, 2018, at page 313 of *Hansard* for that day, this test "is very difficult to meet."

I must accept an explanation provided by the Government House Leader, as I must accept any explanation by any member of this Assembly, for I am duty bound. Yesterday afternoon at page 1115 of *Hansard* the Government House Leader said that his remarks were intended to refer to members of the Executive Council and not entirely to the government caucus. On that basis, I cannot find that the elements of the test have been met. As is noted in paragraph 494 of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, "statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted."

I understand that members of the opposition have rightly taken offence at certain activities that occurred during the evening of June 19, 2019. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it has not been my experience that there is a positive correlation between sitting late into the night and decorum inside this Assembly. While it is the opposition's right to raise concerns regarding incidents that occur within the Chamber that may affect decorum, I want to emphasize that a question of privilege and, in particular, the assertion that a member has misled this Assembly is a very serious matter. I would also like to remind members that we all must work together, no matter what time of the day or night, to ensure that order and decorum are maintained in this Assembly.

There is no prima facie question of privilege with respect to intentionally misleading this House. The matter is now closed.

We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Federal Carbon Tax

21. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its support for the government in its efforts to challenge the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on Alberta, which this Assembly views as a clear violation of provincial jurisdiction, including the launching of a constitutional challenge if necessary; acknowledge the negative impacts that a carbon tax has upon the people of Alberta, including the increased cost to heat homes and run businesses in the midst of an economic downturn; and recognize that Alberta's oil and gas industries continue to be global leaders in emissions reduction.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion according to Standing Order 18(1)(a). Are there those wishing to speak? The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in support of Motion 21. Let me begin with some context. In the spring of 2015 the NDP ran on a platform which did not include a single reference nor even an intimation of the imposition of a carbon tax. Indeed, if you consult the fiscal annex of the 2015 NDP platform, there is a detailed iteration of tax changes under a prospective NDP government – increases in personal income taxes, increases in taxes on job creators, various other tax increases – but strangely you will note, Mr. Speaker, the complete omission of any reference to a carbon tax, a carbon levy, a climate leadership plan levy, or any other euphemism that could be used to describe the carbon tax.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Yet immediately upon forming government, the previous NDP administration commissioned a panel which recommended the imposition of a carbon tax, which the NDP promptly did in the fall of that year, just scarce months after having received a mandate without a carbon tax commitment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that constituted the single largest tax increase in Alberta history. It took \$1.8 billion out of the pockets of Albertans. It made everything more expensive. It made it more expensive for ordinary working families to fill up their gas tanks, for seniors to heat their homes, for charities and nonprofits simply to operate. It punished people, Albertans, for living ordinary lives in this cold northern climate. And it did all of that with no measurable environmental benefit. In fact, it was very simply and obviously a cash grab. In fact, in the NDP's 2018 budget they hid in the numbers their ultimate intention, to which they confessed under questioning from the media and the opposition, to raise the carbon tax from the initial \$20 to \$30 a tonne and then to \$50 a tonne. Their plan was to raise it by that additional 67 per cent without any offsetting increase in low-income rebates and without any offsetting increase in, ostensibly, environmental spending.

As the tax grew and became a bigger and bigger burden on people, it increasingly was designed by the NDP to become a regressive tax, a tax on the poor, a tax that would make it – I always thought, Mr. Speaker, to put one's mind, if one can, to think about this from the NDP perspective, that this must have been a bitter pill to swallow. I don't know how the former Finance minister and the Premier got away with persuading a party that used to pretend to be a voice of economic progress, of redistribution of wealth. How did they get away with persuading their caucus and party to impose the

most punishingly regressive tax conceivable, a tax on the consumption of energy, with no offsetting rebates, one hundred per cent of which incremental revenues were to be directed – where, Mr. Speaker? – to the general budget slush fund, the general revenue fund, to pay for the NDP's fiscal mismanagement?

3:00

And so they were forced, in the spring of 2018, to admit what Albertans suspected all along, that their secret carbon tax agenda was little more than a regressive cash grab that would punish the poor for heating their homes. That's one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of Albertans consistently in public opinion polls indicated their opposition to the NDP's carbon tax cash grab.

That's notwithstanding the previous government having added insult to injury by taking tens of millions of dollars generated by the punitive carbon tax to then pay for advertising telling Albertans why they should be grateful to pay the carbon tax. I'll never forget being at a movie theatre in Calgary, and they had the chutzpah to run a trailer ad before the movie began telling people how lucky they were to give the NDP government a cash grab, which elicited a chorus of boos through the movie theatre. When I heard that, I thought: you know, maybe the NDP is actually not listening to Albertans on this.

But we did. I'm proud to say that we did, Mr. Speaker. We did, and that is why we ran on a commitment to introduce as Bill 1 in this Legislature the carbon tax repeal act. It was announced in the Speech from the Throne of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, and I was proud to stand in this place that afternoon and introduce for first reading the carbon tax repeal act. I would like to thank the majority of members in this place, all of them in the government, the United Conservative caucus, for having voted to repeal the carbon tax. I was immensely proud to join the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board in Her Honour's office opposite our Chamber as I witnessed her granting royal assent to make the carbon tax repeal law.

Do you know what happened immediately, Mr. Speaker? Gas prices went down by about 6 or 7 cents a litre all across the province, and everywhere you looked, gas prices were typically under a buck. Everywhere I go, people come up to me and say: thank you for what you're doing, especially for saving me money on filling up my car. So the people are benefiting already from a government that listens to Albertans in eliminating that punitive tax.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the House, however, that the NDP, if I'm not mistaken – I want to consult here with the hon. the Government House Leader. Am I correct in asserting that the NDP voted against Bill 1?

Mr. Jason Nixon: That's correct. Shameful. But yeah.

Mr. Kenney: The NDP, Mr. Speaker: shockingly, they had a chance – they had a good month or a few weeks after the election – to go into a period of reflection and soul-searching. Now, I've been through that before. I've been in a party that lost an election. Normally what you do is that you take a step back and you ask yourselves: "What did we do wrong? How did we lose people's confidence?" Now, I would think that impulse towards introspection might be particularly urgent for the first political party in Alberta history to have lost government after just one term. I can tell you that if I had been in such a party, I would say to my colleagues, "You know, we need to take a step back and think about: how did we get so profoundly offside public opinion that we just suffered one of the worst trouncings in Alberta electoral history after just one term?"

I would have thought that the NDP caucus, perhaps in a spirit of humility, might have gathered and said to each other: “You know, maybe that carbon tax that we hid from voters and then imposed on them and then raised by 50 per cent and then planned on raising by another 67 per cent, that carbon tax that we had planned to make a regressive tax on the poor and a transparent cash grab – maybe that was one of the big mistakes. Maybe we should pull back a half step and just rethink this. Maybe there’s some other way. Maybe we can actually have an effective environmental policy that reduces emissions without punishing seniors for heating their homes and nonprofits for turning on the lights.”

I guess that was too much to expect of the NDP because as we can see through their comportment in question period and elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, they’re angry. Instead of moving into a moment of introspection and analysis about this and other issues, they’re angry with Albertans for disagreeing with their ideological cash grab called the carbon tax.

That is why, shockingly, they voted against Bill 1, which was the centrepiece of the largest democratic mandate granted to a party in Alberta political history. And in that vote against Bill 1, you know what the NDP was telling Albertans? “You were wrong, Albertans. You were wrong to elect a government with a mandate to repeal the carbon tax.” The NDP said, frankly, in its arrogance that not only were you wrong, but implicit in that vote was a commitment by the NDP to reintroduce the carbon tax should they ever get the chance to do so. Well, thankfully, they won’t.

That’s one of the reasons that we have brought forward Motion 21 before the Assembly today, because we want to give the NDP a chance to redeem themselves, to redeem their vote in favour of the carbon tax and their original imposition of it. I just plead with them, Mr. Speaker, to think about listening to Albertans on the carbon tax. If they vote in favour of Motion 21, what they will be doing is voting to endorse our government’s defence of Alberta taxpayers against the encroachment on our jurisdiction with a punitive federal carbon tax, which is slated for introduction in this province on January 1 of next year.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Assembly that the United Conservative Party, even while in opposition, joined with a growing number of provincial allies across the federation to defend our taxpayers and taxpayers from coast to coast. Let me single out for recognition and commendation the government of Saskatchewan, which led a valiant fight against the overwhelming pro carbon tax forces in Canadian politics for two years until being joined by allies in other provinces. Let me thank former Premier Brad Wall and current Premier Scott Moe for their leadership in this respect, which leadership ultimately was reflected in a judicial reference to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal on the federal carbon tax.

I’m pleased to inform the Assembly that the United Conservative Party, at its own expense, applied for and obtained intervenor status at the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal to support the reference of the government of Saskatchewan. We regret the decision of the court, a 3 to 2 split decision, to decide in favour of the federal imposition.

But, Mr. Speaker, I hasten to add – and I’m sure my friend the hon. and learned the Attorney General and Solicitor General will be able to provide a more detailed explication of the quite technical grounds upon which the 3 to 2 majority ruled in favour of the federal Crown in that dispute. Let me say as a layman in this respect – and I’m sure the Attorney General will correct me if I violate any sub judice rule here – that it’s interesting to note that almost all of the federal claims in their initial pleadings were dismissed by the

majority. The decision was made on fairly narrow grounds with respect to the peace, order, and good government power.

Mr. Speaker, the important thing is that the government of Saskatchewan is now appealing that decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. We understand that it will be heard in December, and Her Majesty’s Alberta government has applied or will be applying to support our friends in Saskatchewan at the Supreme Court in this case.

Secondly, we sought and obtained intervenor status before the Ontario superior court with an analogous judicial reference on the federal imposition of a carbon tax in that province. I understand we are expecting a decision from that court any day or week at this time.

Thirdly, we’ve indicated to the provinces of Manitoba and New Brunswick that we will also support their prospective judicial references defending their taxpayers. I, Mr. Speaker, am proud to stand on behalf of Albertans with the governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick in defending Canadian taxpayers.

3:10

Let me add, Mr. Speaker, just a quick review of how this issue is playing out in other provinces. This is very interesting. In Atlantic Canada the federal government cut a special side deal, which allowed – let’s be polite and call it a creative workaround of the carbon tax in the Atlantic region. For example, in P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador the federal government has imposed a carbon tax which, they agree, could be immediately offset by proportionate reduction in the provincial excise tax on gasoline. Effectively, it’s a shell game, with no net increase in the tax on consumers.

The federal government has allowed their partisan allies in Atlantic Canada to live with a deal that takes no more money out of people’s pockets, essentially, yet they’re threatening to punish Albertans, Ontarians, Manitobans, New Brunswickers, and Saskatchewan for not complying.

Let me shift, then, to Quebec. This is very interesting. Quebec is allowed to engage in a different kind of a workaround. It’s called a cap and trade system.

The truth is this. I refer to an op-ed dated May 9, 2019, in the *Financial Post*, written by Jean Michaud and Germain Belzile of the Montreal Economic Institute, in which they estimate that the effective cost on the Quebec economy of that province’s cap and trade substitute is 50 per cent of the cost of the carbon tax being imposed on Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the other provinces. Let me cite from this article.

One province should not pay an effective rate that’s higher than another. Even worse, in those provinces where the federal carbon tax “backstop” is imposed – Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and likely soon Alberta – the tax will be twice as high, if it reaches \$50 [a] tonne in 2022 as scheduled, than the de facto rate in Quebec, which is expected [at that point] to reach around \$25. This is because the price of Quebec’s cap-and-trade plan is linked to the price of permits sold on a market it shares with California, and where the California government deliberately oversupplies permits to keep prices low. Projections for prices on that market show permit prices rising to remain below \$25 by 2022. Still, the federal government approved Quebec’s cheaper plan as sufficient to avoid the more expensive federal “backstop” carbon tax. We are therefore punishing certain producers more than others, which will certainly hurt an industry already faced with many problems.

Indeed, the Canadian oil and gas sector is dealing with several challenges; a higher carbon tax just adds insult to injury.

That is not from an Alberta Conservative source. These are from Quebec economists pointing out that the federal government is seeking to impose a carbon tax on us that is effectively twice the level of the one that they are accepting in Quebec. How is that fair in the federation, Mr. Speaker? It's not. It's one of the many grounds upon which we will file our judicial reference, that was announced by the hon. the Attorney General five days ago.

I'll close my tour of the federation on carbon taxes by pointing out that British Columbia, often referred to as a great model by the NDP opposite – well, guess what? In part thanks to their carbon tax, folks are paying a buck 70 to fill up their gas tanks. We all have friends and relatives in the Lower Mainland. What's the number one issue down there right now? A buck 70 gas. Part of that is because they're not getting enough product, oil, shipped to B.C. – and we hope to correct that with the Trans Mountain expansion – but a big part of it is the B.C. carbon tax. By the way, Mr. Speaker, here's an inconvenient truth for you: emissions in British Columbia, CO₂ and GHG emissions, are higher today than when they introduced the carbon tax several years ago. All economic pain, no environmental gain.

On that point, let me point out that here in Alberta, we had the same experience. Last December the CBC interviewed the former Premier, asking her if she could identify by how much – and I'll quote this: "We've had two years with a provincial carbon tax. What kind of decline in fuel consumption have we seen in Alberta in those two years?" The then Premier, now opposition leader, answered: "I would have to get back to you on that. Because, of course, it's related to economic activity . . . So you've got a lot of different things going on at the same time." A follow-up question from CBC: "Do you know if [you've] had a decrease in car emissions during that time" [from that carbon tax]? Answer from the opposition leader: "I honestly can't tell you right now because I wasn't prepped for that."

Mr. Speaker, this was the keynote, singular, centrepiece policy of the former NDP government, that they were saving the planet. In fact, a bunch of them implied that if we hadn't repealed the carbon tax, we wouldn't have forest fires in northern Alberta this summer. Somehow we were saving the planet by punishing seniors for heating their homes in the winter with a tax whose emissions reduction could not even be quantified by the head of that government. Now, maybe the Premier had a bad day, and maybe she just wasn't prepped or whatever.

So let's go to another source, then. Mark Jaccard is an economics professor at Simon Fraser University, a very highly regarded academic. I have tremendous respect for him and his research, and I do respect the fact that he is a strong proponent of carbon taxation. I disagree with him, but he is a proponent. In December of last year, interestingly enough, around the same time the Premier said that she could not articulate the carbon reductions from her tax, Professor Jaccard wrote a very interesting op-ed in the *Globe and Mail*. In it he said – we're always doing this, House leader; I've got some quotes right here on this – that the provincial carbon tax in Alberta had, quote, no discernible impact on emissions, and that the effect of the Alberta NDP carbon tax in reducing emissions was, quote, at most responsible for 5 per cent of the reductions target. Five per cent. Five per cent. So 95 per cent of the purported emissions reduction under the previous government's plan had nothing to do with the carbon tax.

No wonder Albertans threw them out on April 16. No wonder they were fired for punishing – I've told this story before, but I think it bears repeating. Mr. Speaker, my friend the hon. the Government House Leader and the Minister of Environment and Parks had me visit Sundre, which is, I think, known as the beating heart of the Cowboy Trail. It's a great town. He took me to the West Country

seniors' centre, and we visited. You know what drew me to that place? I saw a story on the CBC which I could hardly believe. Occasionally that happens when I see CBC stories. So I decided to go and check it out myself. You know, I followed Ronald Reagan's advice to Mikhail Gorbachev: "Trust, but verify." So I went on a recon mission to the West Country seniors' lodge and met the wonderful volunteer leaders and . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Ray Sharp.

Mr. Kenney: . . . Ray Sharp, the vice-president, because at the time the president was away and couldn't greet me. Mr. Sharp and some of the members of the executive toured me around that wonderful place that keeps seniors in our rural communities out there active. They were playing shuffleboard and darts, and they've got, you know, dances for the seniors and some exercise classes. They only have a budget of \$18,000. Almost all of it is a \$20-a-year membership fee, and the rest is hall rentals. They actually rent out the hall to a Sunday church service. I hope that doesn't offend anybody here, Mr. Speaker. It's a wonderful community initiative.

The thing is this, Mr. Speaker. When the carbon tax came in, at first it was a \$700 charge, and then it was going to go up to a \$1,400 and then a \$2,100 charge out of an \$18,000 budget. They said: we don't know where to go for the money; we're dealing with a lot of low-income seniors on fixed incomes out here in Sundre.

3:20

Ray Sharp told me that they were seriously looking at closing the joint down because they couldn't pay their heating bills. I mean, I was shocked. Then Mr. Sharp called the former Premier's office and said: do you have any assistance for us? They said: we suggest that you raise your membership fees. That was the NDP's answer to a bunch of low-income seniors trying to – you know, politicians are always lecturing people about wellness. The Minister of Health will agree with me about the importance of wellness. I know the Minister of Health wants to encourage seniors to maintain active lives. It's good for both their physical and their mental health. But the NDP was just about to put out of business the one thing in Sundre that keeps seniors most active. That's just one little microcosm.

I remember that with some of my colleagues we went and visited the Calgary Food Bank, Mr. Speaker, just before Christmastime. We pitched in with a volunteer shift for a couple or three hours and packed some boxes. The staff there told me that the effect of the carbon tax on the Calgary Food Bank, if I'm not mistaken, was in the range of \$40,000 to \$50,000. They could have hired a whole new full-time employee to move things faster, to serve more customers. They could have bought a whole lot more supplies for the poor, but they couldn't because of the NDP. I remember – boy, we hear a lot from them about schools, Mr. Speaker. They're not giving us any credit, though, for reducing the carbon tax on schools. The Calgary public board had to spend I think it was up to \$3 million on the carbon tax. They had to take a bunch of buses out of service and cut back on the full-day kindergarten services in their school board jurisdiction as a result. Here's my point. For a tax that was supposed to save the planet, it had no meaningful impact on emissions but had a very real impact on how all of those organizations operated.

Let me continue quoting Professor Jaccard. He said, "I'll bet [the former Alberta Premier] wishes an economist had told her she didn't need the tax, and that it does almost nothing anyway." He goes on further: "Carbon pricing," also known as carbon taxes, "is doing little to decarbonize the economy." Professor Jaccard further went on to say that Ottawa's carbon tax will, quote, only account

for 15 per cent of their emissions targets. So not only was it ineffective in Alberta; it is ineffective federally when it comes to the actual environmental goals that we all share to reduce emissions.

Let me hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, in that respect that our government, first of all, will be launching consultations this summer, led by the hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks, on the development of our technology and innovation emissions reduction levy and fund. That will ensure that major industrial emitters do pay a levy to disincentivize carbon intensity and greenhouse gas emissions. That levy will be designed in a way that provides a lower tax or lower levy on companies that are best-in-class performers with lower than average emissions for similar companies, but it will have a higher price point for companies that have higher than average emissions for their industry sector. This will be an intelligently designed plan that incentivizes constant environmental improvement. It is estimated that the levy will impact 60 to 65 per cent of the emissions produced by the entire Alberta economy and that it will reduce CO₂ emissions by 40 to 45 megatonnes as against the baseline year. So this is a very significant contribution to the imperative of reducing emissions.

I hasten to add this, Mr. Speaker, because one difference, I submit, between the policy setting of our government and that of our friends in Saskatchewan is that we will have a more robust, wide-ranging levy on industrial emissions, which, I believe, will demonstrate to the courts that we as a province have decided to occupy the regulatory space of carbon pricing, to use the language of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. We hope that we'll be in a position to announce the details on the technology innovation and emissions reduction levy and fund in the autumn, in time for consideration by the Alberta Court of Appeal in our judicial reference.

I hasten to add that most of the revenues generated by the TIER fund will be directed to a technology fund to support much of the ongoing work that's existed since the time of Premier Stelmach's government to develop technology that reduces carbon output, technology which can then be commercialized and exported to the developing world.

I want to underscore that this is one of the problems with the NDP's approach, Mr. Speaker. They never understood that their carbon tax policy seemed to imply that Alberta was some sort of hermetically sealed jurisdiction with respect to greenhouse gas emissions, like there was some kind of a biodome over the province, and that's why we had people from the left saying that the Alberta carbon tax was somehow linked to the forest fires in Alberta. That comes from people who don't understand the science. They don't accept the science. We accept the science. The science says that this is a global challenge, not an Alberta challenge. We are responsible for 1.6 per cent approximately of global greenhouse gas emissions; that's as a country. Alberta has about .4 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

We could shut down the entire Alberta economy tomorrow – and Lord knows that the NDP tried – and we would have, Mr. Speaker, an immeasurable impact on global greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, in the same time next year China's incremental growth in emissions would entirely make up for the elimination of the Alberta economy from global emissions.

I urge the NDP to stop denying the science, Mr. Speaker, to stop being science deniers and to start accepting the scientific data, which are clear that this is a global challenge, and if we want to have a real impact on greenhouse gas emissions, it must be a global impact. One way through which we could do so is by investing in technology that can be exported to India, to China, to Africa, to Asia, to these countries that rightfully want to increase energy production to help lift their people from poverty.

I'm pleased – let me go on the record in this debate – to commend my friend the Hon. Andrew Scheer, the federal Leader of the Opposition, for having outlined a very detailed plan centred around this idea of technology as the core solution to the environmental challenge that we together face and the commercialization and exportation of that technology to other jurisdictions. We can be real global leaders on that. That's what the TIER fund will enable us to do.

Mr. Speaker, on this point, though, about the global nature of emissions, this also applies to carbon taxes, as none other than Professor Andrew Leach of the University of Alberta admitted in 2015. Now, he was the principal author of the Alberta NDP carbon tax, but Professor Leach in a moment of commendable honesty said, quote: until the rest of the world has policies that impose similar costs, you're not actually reducing emissions to the extent you think; you're just displacing the emissions and the economic activity to other jurisdictions. This is such an important point that I'm going to read it back into the record a second time. Quote: until the rest of the world has policies that impose similar costs to the carbon tax, you're not actually reducing emissions to the extent you think; you're just displacing the emissions and the economic activity to other jurisdictions, unquote. That's not coming from some Conservative partisan. That's coming from the author of the NDP carbon tax.

3:30

Really, what Professor Leach is talking about there is the problem of carbon leakage. Now, this clearly applied in the case of the Alberta NDP carbon tax, right? Lord knows, we saw a massive displacement of economic activity to other jurisdictions, tens and tens of billions of dollars of investment that fled Alberta under the NDP to other jurisdictions, and most of that fled our energy-producing sector to be reinvested in the energy-producing sector in other jurisdictions that do not have carbon taxes.

I look to my friend the hon. the Minister of Infrastructure, who has spent his life as a professional engineer in the oil and gas sector. In fact, he helped to plan the building of the largest refinery on Earth in Jamnagar, Gujarat, India. He knows the industry in intimate detail. I invite the hon. minister to correct me if I'm wrong, but we've seen a massive relocation of capital from Alberta oil and gas to Texas, Colorado, and North Dakota, in particular.

Mr. Panda: Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

Mr. Kenney: And Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan and Iran and elsewhere.

Could the minister tell me: do any of those jurisdictions have a carbon tax? No. I didn't think so, Mr. Speaker. I just needed to confirm that. None of them have carbon taxes, but you know what they have now? They have billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs that we used to have in Alberta. That is what Professor Leach calls the displacement of economic activity. Let me put that in regular language: that's jobs. That's jobs that fled this province. And guess what? Those engineers, those rig hands, those rig operators, all of them: Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, on Sunday I joined my friend the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville at the Ukrainian Catholic vidpust for Saints Peter and Paul church in Mundare, a historic centre of the Canadian-Ukrainian community. At the luncheon that followed the Divine Liturgy, I met a lovely mom with three young boys, ages I think one through five. I was asking about the kids, and she broke down in tears in front of me. She got very emotional. She asked for pictures. She said: "Mr. Kenney, I want to send this to my husband. He's working in Cuba in the oil and gas sector because he lost a job

under the NDP here in Alberta. He just wants to come back and see his boys.” How many colleagues have heard stories like that? Well, I’ve heard them every darn day. You know what? That lady’s husband: that was the displacement of economic activity under the NDP.

Oh, by the way, I know my friends from the NDP, a lot of them, are big fans of the Cuban Communist regime, Mr. Speaker, and Venezuela’s socialist dictatorship. Let me ask a question. Does Communist Cuba have a carbon tax? No. That’s a rhetorical question. The answer is no. There is no carbon tax in the Communist regime of Cuba, but that Mundare lady’s husband is there because of carbon leakage. He’s helping produce energy in Cuba that is emitting carbon without a carbon tax. Does that help the global planet, to have displaced that unit of economic activity, that worker from here to there? All it does is move it to a jurisdiction with not only lower environmental standards but no human rights. In that socialist utopia – guess what? – they don’t allow unions either. You can’t make this up.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the reasons why we have sought leave at the Alberta Court of Appeal for judicial reference on the imposition of a federal carbon tax, on which let me say this. We believe the federal carbon tax is a *prima facie* violation of provincial constitutional environmental jurisdiction, and we will make that case very persuasively. We will demonstrate to the court that Alberta is occupying the relevant regulatory space through our TIER fund and other activities that constitute part of our forthcoming climate strategy as a government.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that as bad as the federal carbon tax is – and we’ll fight it every step of the way – it is actually less bad than the NDP carbon tax. Now, why would I say that? Well, I’ll give you a couple of reasons. First of all, 90 per cent of the revenues generated by the federal carbon tax will be recycled back in the form of rebates to one hundred per cent of households whereas only 40 per cent of the revenues generated by the Alberta NDP carbon tax were recycled back as rebates to 60 per cent of households. Right there, from a just pocketbook point of view, it is much less bad.

Now, that, of course, begs the question that Premier Brad Wall raised: what’s the point of taxing people just to run it through an expensive federal bureaucracy, punish them for heating their homes, and then tell them to wait for a government cheque? Could it be, Mr. Speaker, that the real point is to make them grateful to the government for the cheque that they get? I don’t know. I’m just going to go out on a limb here. I think that perhaps – perhaps – the ability to send people another cheque from the government will in the minds of Ottawa render that government more popular with Canadians. I don’t think that Canadians are gullible like that, though. I know that Albertans certainly aren’t. They didn’t buy it.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, all the polling indicated – and I’m proud to say this – that the United Conservative Party trounced the NDP on April 16 amongst low-income Albertans, and those are the people who were getting the rebate cheques from the NDP. You know what? I used to have people say to me: aren’t you concerned that all those rebate cheques are going to, you know, like the previous government intended, buy voters’ support? Here’s the good news. This is a province filled with a surplus of common sense. People weren’t going to be bought with their own money, and they sent that lot packing after trying to buy votes with their own tax dollars. Today we heard it in question period. My friend the Minister of Environment and Parks got a question from across the way about how they had a subsidy program for solar panels that wasn’t costing taxpayers. Only in the voodoo economics world of the NDP can you have a subsidy that doesn’t cost taxpayers anything. Albertans are too smart; they saw through it. They

understood that there was a very heavy cost, the biggest tax hike in Alberta history, the carbon tax.

Let me say, parenthetically, that I’ll endorse the comments of my hon. colleague during question period. Sure, we encourage people if they want to invest in solar panels as companies, as individuals – bully for them – but we’re not going to force their neighbours to pay for their solar panels. We’re not going to punish the Sundre seniors’ centre to subsidize solar panels for people living in million-dollar homes in Calgary and Edmonton, Mr. Speaker. We’re not going to do that. We’re not going to transfer wealth through a regressive tax from low-income people who could never afford solar panels in a regressive upward transfer of income to upper middle class and wealthy people to have subsidized solar panels. No. We’re not going to pursue regressive and punitive policies like that. That, again, is one of the reasons why we are making this application.

Let me finally say, on the TIER approach, the technology innovation and emissions reduction fund, that we have indicated – I said to the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister on April 18, when we spoke by phone, and reconfirmed this with him six weeks ago in Ottawa – that we are prepared to work with the federal government on the details of the application of the TIER levy, and we seek to find common ground. I would plead with the federal government not to make this legal dispute necessary.

Instead, they could seek the path of compromise. They could seek the path of collaboration with the provincial governments. We all share the goal of real, practical reduction in emissions. In our case we also have as a goal reducing a tax burden on ordinary people and growing our economy. Surely, we could sit down in good faith and try to find some way of working together, at least on the major emitters portion. It is, however, regrettable to see the sort of take-no-prisoners, Ottawa-always-knows-best attitude of the hon. federal environment minister McKenna and the federal Liberal government.

3:40

You know, let me give you an example. Manitoba was prepared, in the spirit of compromise within the federation, to impose its own carbon tax, but guess what? They weren’t willing to punish Manitobans enough to satisfy the federal Liberal government. Instead of sitting down with Manitoba, as Premier Pallister offered to do with his federal counterparts, instead of sitting down and working out a compromise situation, perhaps at the price point and the technical rules around its application, the feds said: no; it’s Ottawa’s way or the highway. They had a potential ally on this issue, Premier Pallister, pull out and instead join us and the growing majority of provinces defending taxpayers against carbon taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I would just make one last appeal to the federal government. Stop the Ottawa’s-way-or-the-highway approach. The Prime Minister was elected on a promise to establish an open and balanced federalism. Threatening our taxpayers with a massive new burden on January 1 that will initially raise gas prices by seven cents a litre and then raising it by another 67 per cent to \$50 a tonne: that’s not the way of compromise. That’s not open federalism.

I hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, that raising the federal rate to \$50 a tonne is just the beginning. Two weeks ago the Parliamentary Budget Officer calculated that the federal Liberal carbon tax will have to rise at least five times higher than it is today in order for Canada to reach its Paris targets. That’s over \$100 a tonne. That’s a very modest estimate, because there was in 2017, I believe, a document leaked from Environment Canada that had been prepared for Minister McKenna which said that the carbon tax would have to rise to \$300 a tonne by 2050 to make the targets. That’s 10 times the current rate.

The IPCC, the International Panel on Climate Change, in a report released last year estimated that carbon taxes would have to be between \$500 and \$5,500 a tonne. I've described this frog-in-the-pot syndrome before. Mr. Speaker, when we go to court this fall in this reference to defend Albertans, please understand that it's not just on a \$20-, \$30-a-tonne carbon tax; it's to defend us from their ultimate hidden agenda.

Let's face it. What is that agenda at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker? It's more control over people's lives. That's really where I just can't agree with this agenda. It's politicians who have the arrogance to try to control people's lives and the choices they make in just living ordinary lives.

You know, I talked about those low-income folks who voted overwhelmingly for the United Conservative Party recently, the same people who were getting the rebate cheques but weren't going to take that as an electoral inducement, the same people the NDP wanted to punish with the increasingly regressive NDP carbon tax. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Not only are those the people who can't afford to put solar panels on their houses even with the government subsidy; they can't afford to go and buy a \$90,000 Tesla even if it's subsidized. All those subsidy programs: they tend to work out really well for the upper middle class and really badly for working people. That's why it's so shocking that the NDP pretends to be a party representing working people, but it wants them, through a regressive carbon tax, to pay for subsidies for the choices that well-off people with discretionary income want to make.

Mr. Schow: Champagne socialists.

Mr. Kenney: Oh, I think my friend from Cardston-Siksika just coined a phrase. I think he said, "Champagne socialists." Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not our style. Those are not our values. Our values are to defend ordinary working people who live ordinary lives from unnecessary interference from government and allow them to have a little bit of relief from the constant cost of higher taxation.

Mr. Speaker, I will just close by reiterating that the motion before the House, Motion 21, is I think a magnanimous opportunity on the part of the government to the NDP opposition to demonstrate to Albertans that they've learned their lesson. They obviously made a mistake by voting against the carbon tax repeal. Maybe that was just because they were so emotional after the election, so angry, that they hadn't had a chance to really think about it yet. It's now two, three weeks later. I hope they've had a chance to reflect introspectively on the message that Albertans sent them on April 16. I note with curiosity that the NDP is very excited, febrile with excitement, that some union presidents with whom they are formally affiliated are suing Alberta taxpayers right now. The NDP just are thrilled about that, to see their allies suing Alberta taxpayers.

Here's the weird thing, Mr. Speaker. They were never prepared as a government to stand up for Albertans and sue the federal government over its threatened carbon tax, to sue the federal government over its intrusion into our exclusive provincial jurisdiction to control our own resources, contra bills C-48 and C-69. They're happy to sue Alberta taxpayers, but maybe they'll change their minds. So far their record is that they're opposed to using every legal tool available to us to defend Alberta taxpayers. But they can change that record by voting in favour of Motion 21, by endorsing Alberta's reference to the appeal court on the constitutionality of the carbon tax. In so doing, they can join the growing majority of Canadian provinces.

I plead with the NDP: please don't put yourself in a position where the governments of New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan are joining us in court to defend Alberta taxpayers

when the NDP won't even do so. What a strange world that would be to see the government of Ontario doing more, and I suspect they will probably intervene in our case to support us. Wouldn't it be peculiar, passing strange, to see central and eastern Canadian governments more concerned about the welfare of Alberta taxpayers than Alberta's Official Opposition that just weeks ago formed government.

Mr. Speaker, I offer this opportunity to the NDP, an opportunity to stand up and vote for Alberta taxpayers by opposing the threatened imposition of a federal carbon tax. We certainly will. We invite them to join with us.

I move that we adjourn debate on Motion 21. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 8

Education Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Nielsen moved on behalf of Mr. Eggen that the motion for second reading of Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 8, Education Amendment Act, 2019, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 24: Mr. Jason Nixon]

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone wishing to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 8? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak today on Bill 8 and the amendment. As discussed in this House before – and I was pleased to speak to this bill just the other night, last night actually, to speak about my concerns with respect to the Education Act and what is being proposed by this government. In particular, I highlighted last night and I began to talk about a number of the changes that were brought in . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, it is regrettable to inform you; however, it appears that you have already spoken to the amendment. My apologies for recognizing you.

However, I believe that the Leader of the Official Opposition would like to be recognized.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

3:50

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to rise to speak to what we have all commenced to refer to as Bill Hate, this government's plan to take away the rights of young LGBTQ kids in our schools. You know, it's interesting. Yesterday it was quite fascinating, really, to listen to the Premier in question period where he had the temerity, really, to frame himself and others in his caucus as being victims, victims of bullying, he claimed, actually. I have to say that it really struck me as being quite something. This is a government that in its very, very short period of time has actually done more in three months than many governments have in three terms on the matter of bullying.

For instance, Madam Speaker, we have a government that has set aside \$30 million not to advertise to Canadians to promote the good sense and the smart economic policies around supporting our oil and gas industry and ensuring that we have responsible, sustainable

means of moving an ever increasingly environmentally sustainable product to market – not that kind of thing – but rather to demonize any person, including any Albertan, who would actually have the temerity to stand up and speak in support of taking action to protect our climate or to protect our environment. In fact, one of the first things this government did was that they set aside \$30 million so that they could then start demonizing people who are concerned about the environment. Interestingly, polling will tell you that that group of people tends to be a younger group of people, and we'll get back to that theme in a moment.

Now, of course, they've also set aside or embarked upon some committee work to study whether or not they should take the \$15 an hour minimum wage – of course, a minimum wage that is received by often the most vulnerable in society and those who have access to the least because it is a minimum wage – and consider whether or not we should take that away and rip that away from people who serve alcohol. Of course, we know that that is primarily women, so they're thinking about taking stuff away from women, thinking about going after people who are concerned about the climate and the environment.

They also, as we know, through Bill 9 decided to strip away the hard-won constitutional rights of people who belong to unions. Who are those people? Particularly public-sector workers who belong to unions. I'm sure it will come as no surprise to you, Madam Speaker, that the majority of those people are women, and those people actually often work protecting vulnerable Albertans. But according to this government things like the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: well, if you're a public-sector worker you don't deserve them, and you must, in fact, submit yourself to the bullying of a government that wants to rip up legal contracts that they have with you and potentially pay you less. So there's a bit of bullying there.

Then, of course, we have, I think, the bullying that is inherent in the demonstration we saw last week, where the members opposite gleefully plugged in earplugs so that they wouldn't have to hear about the consequences of ripping away the constitutional and Charter rights of hard-working public servants. I mean, it was a very sort of schoolyard version of bullying, I will say. It was only designed to be funny as the schoolyard version of bullying usually is, but I think, as we all know, it often becomes a thing.

Then on top of it, of course, these folks are also geared towards and focused on definitely taking the minimum wage away from workers under the age of 18 and enforcing a 14 per cent wage cut to workers who are under the age of 18. Again, the most vulnerable workers in Alberta. Absolutely, those are the ones that should be paying the price for the drop in the price of oil. You betcha. Let's make the most vulnerable among us, those who didn't even have a right to vote, pay the cost of that by shouldering a 14 per cent pay cut. But we're the bullies, Madam Speaker. You betcha.

Anyway, the most heinous example of this, though, Madam Speaker, of course, is what these folks are proposing to do with respect to Bill Hate. We know incontrovertibly that LGBTQ kids in our schools are far more likely to be bullied. They are far more likely to commit suicide. They are far more likely to end up on the streets. They are vulnerable. What is the answer of this UCP government to their condition? To strip away their rights to engage in a club which would provide them the emotional and psychological support to help combat what is otherwise a very likely path for many of those vulnerable kids. Well, if you spent the next three months trying to paint a more overt picture of bullying, I don't think you could possibly – possibly – come up with one which is more precise than what we see demonstrated by this UCP government towards LGBTQ kids in our province.

Let's be very clear, Madam Speaker. That is exactly what these folks are doing. It is exactly what they are intending to do. It is exactly the opposite of what their leader said in the election. Their leader said: we will not legislate on divisive social issues. Yet we know that Bill Hate is absolutely and entirely dedicated to legislating on what they believe are divisive, but which are not actually divisive, social issues. They are doing that by taking away these rights. We know that.

I mean, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did a very good job last week outlining what was in the previous Education Act. What one would do if one were actually interested in bringing into force the previous Education Act, which was introduced in about 2012 and remained unproclaimed by the predecessor government to the UCP for three years and then, of course, was not proclaimed by our government because there were sound reasons not to proclaim it and we didn't agree with much of it. Then they brought it forward again after the election, and they stripped out almost anything in it that would change what's currently policy except that it allowed them to legislate on divisive – their words; not ours – social issues in complete violation, contradiction, and in a profound demonstration of dishonesty to the people of Alberta, because what they always wanted to do was to go after young LGBTQ people in our schools.

4:00

Let me talk a little bit about the history of this issue, Madam Speaker. It actually started in the fall of 2014. Many, many members of this Assembly were not here at that time. Actually, let me correct. It goes back to I think it might have been the spring of 2014 and maybe even the fall of 2013. It started because the then Member for Calgary-Buffalo, Kent Hehr – I believe I call him by his name now that he's no longer in the House – won one of those draws that those of us in our tiny little opposition back in the day never won. Certainly, we never won it when we were the fourth party. But Kent Hehr did win a draw. He got to put forward a motion to this House, just to be clear, much like the motion that the Premier just put forward about when you're a private member, you never got to do what the Premier just did.

Just to be clear, I did listen briefly to much of what the Premier was just saying, and I look forward to countering the many, many inaccuracies embedded in the long list of inaccuracies, that some poor people who were in here were subjected to and forced to listen to. Anyway, that will be later. I digress.

When in opposition it's very rare that you get a chance to put forward a motion. But Kent Hehr did. He put forward a motion calling on the government to establish a right to GSAs, and the government promptly voted him down. We then suddenly realized that this was an issue. A lot of people at that point stood up and said: "Wait a minute. Why would you do this?" A lot of kids were hurt and disappointed and saddened by it. We started to hear more and more of the stories about why this was such a bad thing. At that point the Edmonton public school board actually did encourage GSAs, in part because of the, frankly, continent-leading policies that were established under the leadership of the now Member for Edmonton-Glenora and former Minister of Health when she was the chair of the Edmonton public school board.

So that happened. Then flash forward to the fall of 2014. Once again, the Liberal opposition won a lottery and got a chance to introduce a private member's bill, a very rare thing. My whole time in opposition, Madam Speaker, I never got to do a motion, never got to do a private member's bill. But the Liberals were very lucky that year. So the then Member for Edmonton-Centre, Laurie Blakeman, introduced a bill to guarantee GSAs and to guarantee the right to GSAs on request of students in the school.

Now, as a result of the debate that occurred around the motion, you know, six months or 12 months previously, the new Premier, Mr. Prentice, understood that this was a divisive issue in his caucus and that lots of folks were not onside with this and really did not want this bill to be debated on the floor of the House. He understood that it would create a great deal of conflict and it would be very embarrassing for Albertans to learn how many members of their caucus at that time had very retrograde views of LGBTQ people and the rights of LGBTQ kids. So they rushed to create a replacement bill by the government to use that procedurally to push that private member's bill off the agenda so that nobody could debate it, and they succeeded. Laurie Blakeman's bill was pushed to the side, and it was never debated, and she couldn't vote on it.

The problem was that in their fury to play that little legislative game and knock that political bombshell off the front page, they replaced it with a bill which, unfortunately for them, really did reveal much of the homophobia that they'd been trying to hide from the rest of Albertans. That bill, if possible, actually rolled back the rights, what little there were, that existed for those students at the time. I remember that as we started going through it and we read through the bill, we were appalled. We referred to it as the Jim Crow bill. They were setting up a separate but equal situation where LGBTQ kids could request a GSA, and if the principal rejected it – the principal retained the right to reject that request – then the student could ask the Department of Education to provide them with a facilitator, and they could meet somewhere off school grounds.

Lucky them. They could have their own school club that didn't involve a school administrator, nor did it involve happening anywhere near the school. We used to joke around about how: "Oh, that's just great. You know, they're just going to go across the street and meet in the 7-Eleven in the parking lot. Isn't that a lovely demonstration of how much this Conservative, now UCP, group believes in equality?" It was shocking.

Then the other idiotic element of that particular piece of legislation was that if the school would not facilitate helping them find a place to meet offsite, well, then the student could take an application directly to a Court of Queen's Bench judge. Oh, how lovely for them. You know, we could just picture the flurry of vulnerable 15-year-old kids rushing into the courthouse to submit their arguments to a Court of Queen's Bench judge because every 15-year-old feels that empowered. You betcha.

Anyway, it was an outrageous piece of legislation, and the government of the time, the predecessor to this UCP, was laughed out of the press gallery, laughed out of this Assembly. They looked ridiculous. Their homophobia was showing. It was a profound embarrassment, and they had to withdraw the bill.

Now, three months later we came back in the spring, and because this was still an issue, it was still burgeoning – they had made a huge mess of it, and Albertans saw what they saw – they introduced round 2 when they introduced Bill 10. Now, I will acknowledge, as many others on the other side have argued, that our caucus did vote in favour of Bill 10 because at the time it seemed to fix many of the problems of that outrageous insult of the predecessor bill and it essentially replicated the bill that had been put forward by the Liberals. We ultimately thought: "Okay. They've finally come around. Here we go. They must be prepared to do stuff. You know, they finally realized they were wrong. In principle the right things were included in that bill, so we will vote for it." That, of course, is the bill that Bill Hate is now putting back into place.

Here's the thing, Madam Speaker. Just a few short months later the predecessor party to this UCP was voted out of office, and we set about doing the job in government. Soon we started receiving complaints from students and from families, and we started learning

that students' rights were still being regularly rejected, regularly subverted, regularly trod upon. They were regularly being victims of bullying. We said to the public service: oh, this is outrageous; we have to finish this. Then we started digging into things, and we discovered, lo and behold, that Bill 10 actually was rife – rife – with loopholes that were designed to ensure that a school that did not want to have a GSA could very, very effectively prohibit having a GSA. That is the situation that we are dealing with now.

How did that happen, and how does that work? I mean, I think people have talked about it already, but let me just review it again. Bill 10 and/or Bill Hate now does not require schools, any schools, to have an LGBTQ policy. It requires public schools to say yes to a GSA if a GSA is requested. It does not, however, require those schools to have an LGBTQ2S-plus-positive policy.

4:10

What we discovered was happening in many public schools was that the teachers and the guidance counsellors and the principals and others who came into the school would teach classes or articulate to students in a number of different settings that homosexuality was wrong, that marriage is only truly between a man and a woman, that girls must dress like girls and boys must dress like boys and those are the only two things that there are. They were told that anything else was wrong, and that permeated throughout the school. There was no policy to prohibit that.

Then, lo and behold, these schools would come to us all innocent and say: oh, well, no, we don't have a GSA, but that's because no student ever requested one. Well, for heaven's sake, Madam Speaker, why would a student in that setting ever request a GSA when each and every day that they were in school, they were told by the teachers and the guidance counsellors and the leaders of that school that to request a GSA would be to put themselves out of the norm of what was acceptable within that publicly funded school? We very clearly realized that what was happening and what the UCP predecessor party had put in place was a clear system to allow schools to actively discourage kids from making that request for a GSA.

That was the first thing, so what we decided in Bill 24 and what we did, which this group is trying very hard now through Bill Hate to reverse, is we said: there must be a policy that prohibits a school from doing that kind of stuff. It's not acceptable for there to be an institutionalized form of bullying within our schools, and we actually knew that it existed. So that's the first thing that we did, and that's exactly what these guys want to undo. They want to permit an institutionalized form of bullying. That is what Bill Hate does, Madam Speaker.

Now, the next thing that we discovered was that there were great swaths of schools that received public funding throughout the province of Alberta that had outrageous policies that discriminated overtly against LGBTQ kids. They had written policies, written practices, written doctrines that discriminate against the LGBTQ community, doctrines that were very similar to the kind of thing we saw replicated at the private university institution that the Finance minister was recently a board member for, outright discriminatory policies. Yet, we discovered, Bill 10 or what now would be, if this passes, Bill Hate included nothing to protect kids in those private schools. It had no application to those private schools, so there could be institutionalized, written in black and white, discriminatory bullying in schools that received 70 per cent of their funding from Albertans, in stark violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and, more importantly, in stark violation of what I believe is the Alberta consensus against discrimination and bullying in any setting that is a public space, and by "public space" I mean a space that receives taxpayer dollars.

So, Madam Speaker, we said: no; that's got to change, too. That is not acceptable. We said: we are going to extend the application of the former Bill 10, the current Bill Hate, and we are going to make sure that all schools that receive public funding from the people of Alberta will be compelled to refrain from institutionalized discrimination and bullying.

The next thing we discovered was that even where we were in a situation where we had a public school and a child had requested a GSA, they could make the request for the GSA, but the administration of the school could think about it for eight, nine, 10 months until the school year was over or until that child had graduated or until they dropped out because they felt so isolated and bullied by the administration or until they moved on to something else and just gave up. The school had succeeded in teaching that child that giving up on protecting their own psychological, emotional, mental health, not to mention their own right to be free from discrimination, was the right way to go. That's what the school was teaching them.

So we said: that's got to change. We cannot have principals or other leaders in these schools ragging the puck on this, imposing significant psychological and emotional damage on these kids at the same time. We can't have that because that's not what Albertans believe. That's not what we agree on. It's also wrong. It's actually just a really crappy thing to do. So we said: we'll change that.

Then the final thing that we learned was that even where we had a publicly funded school and even where the child had managed to push through the institutionalized resistance or discrimination within that public school and even where they requested the GSA, instead of ragging the puck, the principal or whoever said: nope; you cannot have a GSA because it makes people feel uncomfortable. Where that had happened, we then discovered that even there we couldn't do anything about it because there were actually no enforcement provisions within the legislation that had been sneakily put in place by the predecessor to this UCP government, so there was no way to actually force the schools to do the thing that the legislation told them they should do. Once again we said: "Okay. Well, that's not cool. We're going to have to make sure that these schools do that."

I hope that by walking through that you can see how the disingenuous assertions by the members of the UCP government that they are somehow putting in place the most progressive or fulsome protection for GSAs in the country are deeply offensive to anybody who has spent any time reviewing the legislation and the practice and the policy on this issue ever. It is disrespectful to anybody in this House for members opposite to ever utter that phrase again because what I just described is what is real, and members opposite have either intentionally refused to learn the issue or are intentionally misleading the House when they make those kinds of statements.

I will tell you this. When we were working to enforce this legislation, we had school officials come to us and say: "You can't enforce this legislation. We were promised by the previous government that they would never make us do it." That is exactly what the members opposite are going back to, because in contrast to the stated commitments that their leader made during the last provincial election, they are legislating on social issues. They are legislating to ensure that institutionalized discrimination against LGBTQ kids can be maintained and preserved in the province of Alberta, and that is shameful, Madam Speaker, absolutely shameful.

The last thing that came up while we were looking through why we needed to change the legislation was the issue of whether or not children who requested a GSA would be outed to their parents. Now, we have so much independent evidence about why this is an important issue. Look to the reports that have been made by the child advocate. Look to the countless declarations of their own

history, the stories that have been told by real kids who outline what happened to them. One hopes that in most cases parents will love and accept and support their kids for who they are, but it doesn't happen every time.

4:20

As I said previously in this Legislature just two and a half weeks ago, I ran into a complete stranger who offered up to me his story, that if he had come out to his parents when he was in high school, he would have been beaten. He knew that. I have very dear friends who hid their sexuality from their parents for decades because they believed that they would be ejected from the family. This is a true thing. It is real. It is the reality of these kids. So protecting their privacy is fundamental.

When we were going through the legislation and the change to Bill 24, we realized that we were still in a position where this issue of telling the parents about a kid asking for a GSA would likely prevent many kids from pursuing this, so we set about to fix that as well. That is what we did through Bill 24.

I want to digress for just a little bit here on the issue of outing kids. In a strange turn of events we saw the Privacy Commissioner weigh in on this issue, not normally a thing that you see. As much as I have, on many different issues, great respect for the work that the Privacy Commissioner has done and continues to do to ensure transparency in the province of Alberta, I will say that on this her intervention was not helpful, nor was it terribly accurate. In essence, she tried to argue that kids would be prevented from being outed under the legislation or the language in Bill Hate, and I would argue that Bill Hate essentially says that kids can be outed only if the information that they are entitled to keep private somehow could put them at risk.

The problem is that there is no clear understanding of how that is to be interpreted, and in a school that is run by people who believe that being a member of the LGBTQ2S-plus community is wrong, is a violation of their religion, is a violation of what traditional marriage should look like, is a violation of how you should be your best self, that person could easily decide that telling the parents that the child made that request is in their best interests and good for their safety. Indeed, these schools often are connected to these same organizations that practise this outrageously assaultive approach of conversion therapy. The fact of the matter is that that standard is unclear. There's no clear test. It has to be litigated over and over.

Right there, on the very front end, I disagree with what the Privacy Commissioner suggested because putting in that kind of uncertainty opens the door to anybody's interpretation, and back we are to where kids are being told: "Oh, I think, you know, I'm a little worried about you, that you've decided you want this. I think I'm a little worried about how you're feeling right now. I think we might have to talk to your parents because we're a little worried about your mental health." That's the way it would unfold. Then – boom – we are off to tell the parents, and then suddenly the very risk that the kids are worried about and, more importantly, the privacy to which they should be entitled have been breached.

The privacy officer says: well, if that's the case, come to me, and I'll litigate, and I'll consider this, and I'll make a ruling. Well, with the greatest of respect, it's one thing for the Privacy Commissioner to make rulings about whether the bureaucracy does or does not disclose information in a timely fashion in response to requests from various public interest organizations looking for specific reports on specific commissions, yada, yada, yada, and when it takes two and a half years for the Privacy Commissioner to do that, that's one thing. It's not great, but it's one thing. But to suggest that the Privacy Commissioner is somehow equipped to immediately respond to the request by a student for protection from being outed

is ridiculous. That is not something that the Privacy Commissioner's office is equipped to do.

Moreover, going to the Privacy Commissioner's office is not something that that 15-year-old kid who's just been outed and may well be living on the street is equipped to do. Quite honestly, the suggestion that that is the way to go is one of the most tone-deaf things I've ever seen come out of the mouth of the Privacy Commissioner. We shall leave it at that in terms of that particular issue. What kids need is certainty and clarity on what their rights are, and the people who are working with them need to have certainty and clarity around what the rights of those students are.

What exactly are the kinds of policies that we were fighting? I gave you a little bit of an example, but I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, that when we looked through the policies of the many schools as we slowly tried to sort of educate schools and bring them along, I mean, many did great jobs. They set to work – the school boards, that is – and they came up with some wonderfully inclusive policies. They hadn't really turned their minds to it, but once they did, it was a good process, and I think they felt better about it. Sometimes they included the kids, and the kids felt better about it, and the families felt better about it, you know, in terms of creating the policies. It was a good thing.

But some of the policies that came forward were, on their face, breaches of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly if they might have applied to a child of a certain age, and they were definitely discriminatory and bullying in nature. So anyone who thinks that this isn't an issue is wrong, absolutely, completely, and utterly wrong. We know very clearly that there were many schools out there that wanted to perpetuate divisive, bullying, institutionalized versions of discrimination against the kids in their schools that were members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community.

We also know this because, of course, one of the schools that decided to challenge our legislation is a big supporter of the UCP and the Premier. Their lawyer, a member of the UCP and a huge supporter of the Premier, well known for many, many extreme views and positions taken in the courts, too, has said things which were outrageous, comparing the pride flag to the swastika. Could you imagine a 15-year-old kid who, we'll say, is struggling – we'll call him a "him" – with coming to terms with his sexual orientation, who lives in a small community, maybe in northern Alberta, is struggling with how to come to terms with what he believes is his reality and his truth and his orientation, going into school and being told by somebody that being proud of being gay is akin to being proud of being a Nazi? Can you actually imagine that? Yet the guy who said that is a member of the party that now is in government. The guy who said that has not been asked to leave that party. The guy who said that I think probably still has the ear of the Premier because certainly his colleagues are working in the Premier's office, and then suddenly we have Bill Hate.

I know the members opposite will say, "You know, you guys litigated this in the election, and Albertans were more concerned about our fake claims to know how to create jobs," which, to be clear, are fake claims, and sooner or later Albertans are going to realize that, if anything, these guys are going to kill jobs, not create jobs. They're going to certainly suppress wages. That we know already. That's a thing. I think they're likely going to kill jobs as well and also, you know, undermine schools and hospitals and all of those things. Nonetheless, that's me. It's going to take a bit of time for folks to see the stats on that one.

4:30

Nonetheless, they'll say: well, they only cared about our fake plans to create jobs, and they didn't care about all this whining that you guys in the NDP are doing about GSAs. I will grant you that,

obviously, people are very worried about job creation, and there is no question that we did not win the election. You know, the members opposite, today was a particularly arrogant day where it seemed to have been worked into the answer to every question. You know, do what you want. Carry on if you want. A piece of advice: that's going to get really old really fast. But please keep it in your talking points for the next four years. I think it's awesome. I beg of you, in fact. The more you say that, the better.

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

What I will say is this: I believe absolutely, completely, and without qualifications that Albertans did not believe or expect that these folks would come in and act to introduce a piece of legislation that is almost exclusively designed to perpetrate institutionalized discrimination in the schools in this province. I don't believe that that's what Albertans voted for. I believe they were misled by the leader of the UCP during the course of the election.

I also believe that they care about this issue and that while the front-and-centre issue for Albertans is jobs and the health of the economy – I get that. It should be. It's an important issue. People's overall sense of economic security is critical, so I get that. But I also believe that Albertans are fair-minded people who care about other people who are struggling, who are not drawn into rigid, extreme views of hate against minority groups simply because they don't understand them or because they are different than them. That is not the Alberta I know. The Alberta I know is young, well-educated, inclusive, entrepreneurial, optimistic, forward-looking.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill Hate is not that. Bill Hate is divisive. It is ugly, it is exclusive, it is hurtful, and it is an example of bullying in its finest form. This is why we will not support this bill, and this is why members in this House should support our amendment, in order to ensure that this bill goes no further, because it is a historic declaration of hate and division against a community in this province that has been here for as long as this province has been here, that will be here for as long as this province will be here, and that deserves to take its rightful place as equal citizens with equal rights, without fear of discrimination or hateful views or bullying by anybody in the UCP or by their lawyers or by the Premier's political staff or by the Premier. They deserve better, and Albertans expect them to get better, and that is why this legislation is wrong.

There is not a single thing that I said today that I would not be happy, Madam Speaker, to swear an affidavit about and go in front of a judge and be penalized if there was a single thing that I said that was untrue. What I say in this House must be true because I respect this House. I will not say things that I know to be not true because I respect this House, because it is an extension of the democracy of this province. I want you to know that.

I would urge members opposite to change their approach on this issue and join us in adopting this approach and at least acknowledge what they are doing. Have the courage of your convictions. If you want to promote division, if you want to treat LGBTQ kids differently, if you want to take away their rights because you believe in your heart that that's the thing that needs to be done – the member opposite is shaking his head. I don't know. Maybe that's what you want to do. If that's what you want to do, tell Albertans. Have the courage of your convictions, respect this Legislature, tell the truth, stop saying things that are not true, and come clean with Albertans on what your vision is for inclusion, for justice, for equality for all Albertans regardless of where they came from, what they look like, or who they love.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any more speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I suppose someone always has the misfortune of going after the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I will attempt to be as articulate as she was. I think there are a couple of things I'd like to discuss with respect to this bill and with respect to this amendment. Obviously, the amendment would not see it read, and I think that that is the right thing to do in this instance.

The first thing to talk about is the concept of a right, because it gets bandied about a lot. The second thing I'd like to talk about is the concept of bullying and, in particular, my concern that if we begin to call everything bullying, every legitimate question bullying, we lose the ability to make any progress on it. Finally, I would like to touch on the comment of the Privacy Commissioner. I believe that the test that she has presented actually illustrates what the problem with this bill is as opposed to the solution.

The thing that I would like to say is that this is legislating on social issues. There's no question about it. This is a bill that does nothing substantive except to roll back protections on GSAs. It does nothing else of substance. To call it anything but legislating against social issues would be entirely misleading.

I think the first piece that I'd like to discuss is the concept of what a right is. It's important to recognize that if someone in fact has a right, that right imposes obligations on the people around you. In law school they talk about differentiating between a liberty and a right. They do this in ethics as well. The point here is that in the absence of an obligation imposed on someone else, if your right doesn't force someone else to have to respect it, it isn't really a right. In this case that's exactly what the problem is.

We're saying: oh, students have a right to form a GSA, but no one has the obligation to allow them to do that. Well, that's not really a right. In order for it to be a right, when a student stands up and says, "I want to form a GSA," they have to be allowed to do that, and they have to be allowed to do it immediately. If the school is allowed to wait, if the school is allowed to delay, if the school is allowed to deny, if the school is allowed to question the student multiple times on whether that's really what they intend to do, or if they're allowed to force the student to make a different sort of club, that's not really a right. What this bill does is that it takes what would have been a right to form a GSA, and it transforms it into a liberty to form a GSA, that folks can have if they happen to want one.

I think another thing to acknowledge here is that the intention of these clubs is to prevent bullying. They are there so that students can seek the support of their peers so that at a time in their life when they're potentially very vulnerable, when they're struggling with their identity in the most fundamental sense, they have people they can turn to that make them feel safe and protected and heard. In that time when they are vulnerable, if other people are less than charitable and less than accepting about that vulnerability, they have people they can turn to to rely on for support. That's critical. We know that that's critical at any moment in your life when you're struggling with something.

The idea that when legitimate questions are asked about a government that is removing the right of a student, students who are afraid of bullying – that that itself is labelled as bullying I just think is absurd on a level that's almost impossible to comprehend. The idea that calling a legitimate question or a legitimate policy debate bullying and trying to put it into that category is just so deeply offensive to anyone who has ever actually been bullied.

4:40

I think, again, that the idea that standing up for someone else's rights is bullying – I mean, there's a lot of misunderstanding out there in the world about what constitutes bullying. But I think it's pretty clear that if you're talking about a group of people who have all the power – and in this case we're talking about the government. The government has a significant amount of power. They can legislate. They can regulate. They can do a lot of things to affect people around them. Saying that asking the government a question is bullying and that it's somehow on par with what happens to a youth who is in a school who is potentially being pushed into a locker, who is being called names, who is being told horrible things by their peers just boggles the mind. The fact that ministers would be so insensitive as to equate them being questioned with what happens to those youth is shocking to me.

I will say this again. This is legislating on social issues. That's exactly what it is. The government can't get its ducks in a row on a series of fronts. They can't figure out a budget, but they can legislate on social issues, and it has to happen immediately.

I think another thing worth commenting on is the recent ruling of the Privacy Commissioner, because I think it was unhelpful in the deepest sense. Essentially what the Privacy Commissioner has said is: here's a long list of choose-your-own-adventure tests that a student can use to enforce their rights. Well, Madam Speaker, that's absurd. I think probably the most obvious problem with that is when a parent comes forward to a teacher and asks them directly, "Has my child joined a GSA?" and the teacher says, "Pardon me while I get a legal opinion." That's probably going to out the student right there. I think the idea that it's anything but that is absurd. What this needs is a simple rule. The simple rule should be: don't out the student. If you need to perform some sort of analysis after that, fine. But the idea that if a parent comes forward, they're told, "Oh, hang on while I get a legal opinion," or "Hang on while I engage in this long and complicated analysis" – the outing has occurred. This is incredibly unhelpful.

In addition, the test relies on a reasonableness test. Probably close to half of the volume of civil court cases is actually people arguing over whether things are reasonable because most things in law have a reasonableness test. Reasonableness is defined over and over and over again. It's in all sorts of different tests. The ink that has been spilled describing what reasonableness is is incredibly extensive. This is not helpful to students because the problem is that you can always have a valid argument that it was reasonable. It doesn't even require that someone at the school be intentionally trying to be difficult. Someone doesn't have to be trying to fit their view into a definition of reasonableness. They could simply be confused.

That's very, very problematic because we're then leaving ourselves in a position where we're litigating after the fact something that's already – I mean, if that student really is in an unsafe situation, they're long since kicked out of their house. They're long since living on the street. They're long since a young person fighting for their very survival. We're ruling for the Privacy Commissioner two and a half years later? I mean, it's just not going to help. Basically, I think my problem with this is that it implies that there is a clear test when, in fact, there isn't. All one needs to do is look at what the Privacy – it's two pages long. It's got multiple components, none of which are clearly defined. It's not a test that's going to be helpful to a young person.

I think the other thing worth noting on this file is that there's no reason to do this. That's what troubles me the most about it. This sort of weak justification has been advanced about the Education Act, except that the actual legislation doesn't do anything. I think my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has laid that out in excruciating detail.

The truth is that all this does substantively is impact GSAs. It's nothing but an attempt to remove rights from individuals who are young and therefore less able to stand up for themselves, who are potentially in vulnerable situations and therefore less able to stand up for themselves. It is, in my view, the very definition of bullying. It takes advantage of someone who has lesser power in society. I think the fact that in its very first legislative session this government that promised Albertans that they would not legislate on social issues has done exactly that is deeply troubling to me.

I think with that, Madam Speaker, I will move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 12, the Royalty Guarantee Act.

This legislation is an important step in strengthening investment stability in Alberta. There have been several royalty reviews in recent years, Madam Speaker, and these reviews have reaffirmed that royalty rates in Alberta are competitive with other energy jurisdictions. But the reviews themselves have also had negative impacts on investor confidence and our province's ability to compete with other jurisdictions. Industry needs certainty and stability, and without this guarantee, Alberta remains at a competitive disadvantage. Through this bill we are recommending an approach that would guarantee no major changes to the oil and gas royalty structure for at least 10 years.

We will also be guaranteeing that once a well starts producing, it won't be subject to a royalty change for the majority of its lifespan. This guarantee would apply to oil sands oil along with hydrocarbon natural gas. The bill would ensure that the basic structures of our royalty system would remain in place while preserving the ability for regular adjustments, like setting monthly par prices. The existing structure rules and processes would provide industry and government with the ability to address significant market and technology changes while providing stability for investors. To implement this guarantee, we recommend amending the Mines and Minerals Act, which will allow for the use of existing regulatory powers, eliminating the need for new legislation and more red tape.

Madam Speaker, we know that investors can lose faith in a jurisdiction if there is uncertainty surrounding regulations and royalties, which is exactly what happened in Alberta in recent years under the NDP government. Investment literally fled the province, leaving us with nearly 200,000 unemployed oil and gas workers. This legislation is part of a suite of measures designed to let the world know that Alberta is open for business and designed to attract investment back to this province.

I hope that all members will support me in moving forward with Bill 12. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With that, I would also move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. minister, before we deal with the motion, just to clarify, you moved second reading in the opening of your speech?

Mrs. Savage: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:50

Bill 11 Fair Registration Practices Act

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act.

This bill will ensure that regulated professions and individuals applying for registration by regulated professions are governed by practices that are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair. This legislation will, first, remove unfair barriers to the full economic inclusion of new Albertans and foreign-trained Albertans while maintaining the high professional standards that Albertans have come to know and expect; second, ensure fairness in the registration process of foreign-trained individuals who wish to work in the regulated professions and designated trades; and, finally, it will contribute to the outcomes of Alberta's foreign qualification recognition plan, help to build on the existing FQR initiatives, and allow Alberta to benefit from the skills that newcomers bring to the province. This legislation will also apply to trades designated under the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. The proposed legislation is part of our plan to bring jobs and economic growth back to Alberta.

Newcomers are important to our province, and they should be able to fully contribute to the economy. Underemployment causes unnecessary stress for immigrant families when their education and skills are not being used to their full potential, and this problem also represents a significant loss of productivity for the Albertan economy. By removing unfair barriers and maintaining Alberta's high professional standards, the economy will benefit from maximizing productivity and innovation from newcomers.

Now I will make some comments concerning the scope and application of the act. This act will apply to regulated designated trades, regulated nonhealth professions, and regulated health professions. The scope and application of the legislation is to all regulatory bodies outlined in schedules 1 and 2 of Bill 11. In schedule 1 we have included the regulatory bodies that provide registration and licensing for individuals entering the occupation. This is an extensive list to ensure that everyone who applies for registration and licensing in a regulated occupation is treated fairly and equitably. Schedule 2 covers all the government of Alberta ministries that provide registration and licensing, and you will notice that this goes beyond the Department of Advanced Education and the Department of Education. This comprehensive list will ensure transparency and reassure the public that occupations regulated by our government are subject to the same expectations as external regulatory bodies.

It will also include a paramountcy clause stating that where this act and subsequent regulations conflict with the provisions of another act or regulation, this act or the regulation made under this act will prevail. This is similar to legislation in Ontario and Manitoba.

I will now speak to roles and responsibilities as outlined in the act. Through this act we will create a fair registration practices office with oversight from the Minister of Labour and Immigration. The minister will be responsible for all matters under the act, including issuing fines and compliance orders. The minister can delegate specific responsibilities under the act to a Public Service Act employee through regulation, but the legislation will refer to the minister.

Now on to the legislation structure. A fair registration practices code is included in the act. It outlines the general and specific duties that constitute fair registration. These specific duties include:

information provision; timely decisions, responses, and reasons; internal review processes; documentation on qualifications and assessment of qualifications; training; and access to records. For reference, legislation in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia also have fair registration practices codes.

This legislation will include specific provisions in the act to allow regulatory organizations to accept alternative information when making registration decisions where circumstances warrant. We have heard from foreign-trained professionals that circumstances have arisen where they were not able to provide documentation such as a university transcript due to civil unrest in the country where they were educated. Examples of alternative information can include letters of reference or an extensive resumé that can be challenged and evaluated via competency-based examinations.

Under the act a regulated profession shall, first, ensure that it makes an interim registration decision within six months from the time all the required information is received from an applicant – and I note that final registration decisions must be made within a reasonable time frame from the time all the necessary information is provided – second, provide written responses to applicants within a reasonable time; and, third, provide written reasons to applicants within a reasonable time in respect of all registration decisions and internal review or appeal decisions.

In addition, a regulatory body shall make information publicly available on what documentation of qualifications must accompany an application, and where documentation cannot be obtained by an applicant for reasons beyond the applicant's control, advise the applicant what alternative information may be supplied by the applicant that may be acceptable to the regulating body where possible.

There will also be provisions requiring a regulated profession to provide an internal review of or appeal concerning its registration decisions within a reasonable time frame. The act specifies that applicants should have an opportunity to make submissions orally, in writing, or by electronic means. In addition, the internal review or appeal process should not be conducted by persons who made the original decision.

The minister will have the authority to create different classes of regulated professions to impose different requirements, conditions, or restrictions related to this act. If needed, classes would be created by operational policy. The legislation in Ontario and Manitoba also allows this authority and provides greater flexibility.

In addition, it is designated in the act that regulatory bodies are required to provide a report to the minister in the form and with the content prescribed by the minister, provide any additional information requested, and conduct any audits as directed by the minister related to the compliance with the act and regulations. Existing annual reports can be modified to address these requirements.

The minister will also be able to issue compliance orders following consultations with the regulatory body to compel the body to provide the minister with the information deemed necessary to administer the act. Before issuing a compliance order, the minister must provide a detailed notice to the regulatory body and an opportunity for the body to make written submissions.

This act would prescribe a fine for an individual or a body who provides misleading or false information, fails to comply with orders made by the minister, obstructs the minister from performing their duties, or fails to co-operate with a required audit. Persons guilty of the offence are subject to a fine of not more than \$25,000 or in the case of a corporation or regulatory body a fine of not more than \$50,000.

The act will designate that the minister and any employee of the fair registration practices office may not be involved with influencing individual registration decisions or providing advice or

representation to individuals related to individual registration decisions, including internal review and appeal processes. The timing of the review of the act will be subject to the discretion of the minister.

This legislation is similar to that in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia as it includes the ability of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations pertaining to the execution and administration of the act, including the delegation of specific responsibilities that are housed with the minister. While we have studied legislation in other provinces and included similar aspects in this act, Bill 11, please note that the legislation is very much designed for Alberta's specific needs.

The last section I will speak to is the fair registration practices office. This office will reduce the red tape associated with the assessment of foreign credentials and ensure that registration practices are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair. The office, under the minister's oversight, will be responsible for providing information and advice to regulated professions to help them understand requirements under the act. It will also be responsible for reviewing registration practices of regulated professions to make recommendations to regulated professions about how to improve their own compliance and be responsible for advising regulated professions, government agencies, community organizations, postsecondary educational institutions, and third parties about matters under the act.

Advising government departments about matters under this act that may affect the department or a regulated profession for which the minister of that department is responsible will also include reporting to the minister on registration practices related to internationally educated individuals and their registration by regulated professions, advising the minister on matters related to the administration of the act, and, finally, performing any other functions provided for in the regulations.

Instead of creating an access centre, we will establish quality electronic information sources to assist internationally trained individuals seeking licensure.

The Fair Registration Practices Act will come into force upon proclamation.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, our goal is to get all Albertans back to work, including newcomers. I recognize that some newcomer professionals do not yet have the education or skills to meet Alberta's high professional standards. However, the experience of many highly trained immigrant professionals suggests that some professional and trades regulators have unnecessarily complex procedures for licensure, which can sometimes cause professionals to spend years jumping through regulatory hoops while their skills atrophy. This legislation will remedy that problem. Bill 11 is an important part of our efforts to restore the Alberta advantage and ensure fairness for newcomers. It exemplifies our government's commitment to economic growth, job creation, and cutting red tape.

Thank you.

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to provide some comments and analysis on Bill 11 here this afternoon, the Fair Registration Practices Act. You know, I'm very pleased to see this direction happening here in the province of Alberta, and I just wanted to provide, perhaps, a little bit of background for members and for the general public to know the evolution of this idea and how our caucus together with the government will work hard to try to ensure that people with credentials from outside of the

province of Alberta and outside of Canada can have a fair assessment of their credentials so that they can work to the full potential to which they are trained.

You know, the basic concept, I think, is around fairness. We know that there are quite strict criteria, say, to immigrate to Canada from other countries. The criterion by which people can enter Canada is a points system, and a lot of that points system is oriented towards a person's education backgrounds and their credentials and what they can offer to their new home, in this case in Alberta. It's the height of irony that, really, the way by which an individual is admitted into Canada as a permanent resident and then as a citizen is through education, yet when that person does get into our province and into the country, those same credentials that allowed them to immigrate to Canada are not being recognized on a professional level. Thus, that person is not working to their full potential.

I know that this is not an easy process, but it's really encouraging to see that beginning of engagement to look for fair registration practices here in the province of Alberta, that we're starting down that path. Of course, what I think precipitated this – I mean, this is a discussion that we've all had in our constituencies and with the people that live in each of our constituencies because this has been an ongoing problem for a long time, right? Everyone knows the stories of the medical doctor who's driving a taxi or the petroleum engineer that's working at Tim Hortons and so forth. This has been an ongoing challenge that I think needs more formal sort of action by governments across the country.

About three years ago we started the process of taking action against racism, and I was charged to build a plan for the province of Alberta by which we could tackle racism, foster acceptance, and promote inclusion. One of the issues that came up in my travels around the province of Alberta consulting on what actions we should take to promote acceptance and foster inclusion was foreign credentials and fair registration of those credentials that people bring into our province. We heard it over and over again.

You know, I did form a taskforce, a group to work on these same issues just before the last election. Again, this was one of the issues that rose to the top – right? – in terms of taking action against racism with the antiracism group that we had. I think that during the election we saw how things move very quickly and people make sure that they are at least meeting or trying to exceed some good ideas so that they can have them as part of their platform.

I saw, lo and behold, this same concept pop up onto the UCP platform. You know, I was actually very pleased to see that because, of course, we have it covered both ways then, with the government and the opposition both pushing for fair registration and the recognition of foreign credentials, using our combined forces for good, and that's kind of where we're at today.

I guess my observations from the antiracism work that we were doing as the government of Alberta and now looking at this bill is that I think that the biggest focus is to make sure that you're building good relations with each of the professional organizations that exist here in the province of Alberta, that we want to allow some more latitude or discussion of the recognition of foreign credentials. You have a list of organizations that would be covered and it's extensive. It's quite ambitious. My experience, quite frankly, trying to introduce this idea of the recognition of foreign credentials is that sometimes you can run into some resistance with professional organizations that want to maintain a certain number of their professionals in any given field, and they try to set up a quota or they want to protect their lists of their membership.

You know, you have to be very diplomatic around those things because, of course, when any given group – like, you have the paramedics here, pharmacy, social workers, architects, landscape architects, Boilers Safety Association, the Insurance Council,

veterinarians. There's got to be probably about 50 or 60 different groups on this list. You want them to be working together with you to ensure that we are maintaining the highest standards for any of those professional organizations so that Albertans cannot be somehow compromised with the delivery of the Professional Outfitters Society or the Alberta Securities Commission or the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association.

We want to maintain or exceed the standards that are set currently by each of these organizations, and we want to make sure that we maintain an open-door dialogue with those professional organizations every step of the way because, of course, you're introducing – there are people that might have the credentials to be a medical diagnostic and therapeutic technologist from another jurisdiction. You want to make sure that that person is being recognized and being respected for that training that they might have received in a different province or a different country, but you also want to make sure you're respecting the standard by which we expect those professionals in agrology or biology and assessors, forest management professionals – I mean the list goes on – to maintain the standard which we expect here in the province of Alberta in regard to those professions as well.

We know that, Madam Speaker, to ensure diversity and a strong economy, you want to make sure that people are trained and are working to the fullest potential of their ability, of their professional training, and of their capacity to contribute to the economy to help themselves and their family and to help to pay taxes and be part of the larger provincial community. We have to be careful as well because there will be naysayers around this saying: "Well, you know, we have high unemployment already. Why should we be introducing more of these biologists or dental technologists or speech language pathologists or what have you?" But the point is that when you build the pie, just like an economy, you make it larger and you build the economy, too. It's not like just a finite amount of jobs that people are competing for. That's a reductive view of things. But by using the full potential of your population and the workforce that they represent, you will build the economy.

People immigrate to Alberta. Alberta is a very strong place for people to move from other parts of the country and other parts of the world as well. Even during an economic downturn our economy is much more highly functional with higher wages and so forth than most parts of Canada, and vastly more than most parts of the world as well. People want to come here and we want to recognize them for the potential and the training and the expertise that they bring with them. Having those credentials recognized helps to build the economy, helps to diversify the economy. I think those are all things that we value, hopefully, on both sides of the House here.

5:10

We know that if, you know, people are moving here and they're not working to their full potential, then that's not just an economic loss; that's a loss of human dignity – right? – and a loss of feeling confident about oneself and for themselves and for their families as well. I think that we owe it to Albertans. We have the youngest population in the country. We have the highest level of training, I think, in the country, arguably, and we can see it reflected in our schools, which are growing quickly. We have a very fast enrolment growth, I would say the highest in the country. People are having families here. There's a sense of hope and optimism that carried through even during the economic downturn. People have moved here from all over the place and brought with them tremendous training and experience that we should be recognizing and using and contributing to to help to build a stronger province.

Yeah. We can talk about this. There's lots of regulation, I think, that's going to be a challenge, let's say. You know, it's a problem,

but it's a challenge that we can overcome. It's a complicated introduction, but setting down the path for setting up a fair registration practice here in the province of Alberta is an awesome start. I certainly was there to do this in the last government. We put in the foreign qualification recognition fund with our government. We put this as a keystone part of our taking action against racism, and I'm glad to see this concept moving into this 30th Legislature, where hopefully we can achieve some positive good.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and offer my thoughts on Bill 11. I certainly want to thank the minister of labour for bringing this forward and, of course, the Member for Edmonton-North West for his comments. In particular I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for the good work that he did while Minister of Education overseeing the work of the antiracism council and the work that he did jointly with the minister of labour at the time, now the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, for the work they did in creating the foreign qualifications recognition innovation fund that he mentioned.

There are a couple of things that concern me about this bill, and, you know, this is a common theme in this session, Madam Speaker, that the bill is making an appearance of doing something while not actually achieving much in relation to what they want to say. You know, the Member for Calgary-Varsity introduced an open for business act that actually just picked workers' pockets. The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti is talking about creating businesses by offering corporate tax cuts. Well, that's just going to make shareholders wealthier and do nothing to create jobs, Madam Speaker.

I think we have something similar here with this Fair Registration Practices Act. We are creating another government office that will busy itself poking its nose into places that it doesn't really have any business poking its nose and probably won't streamline the process of recognizing foreign credentials in any significant way.

You know, Madam Speaker, there are a couple of different specific tacks I want to take in my comments. I want to make some comments with respect to recognition of trades because in my time as Advanced Education minister, of course, I oversaw the Alberta apprenticeship system, so I have some familiarity with that system, and I have to say that in all of my years in that position I never once had skilled tradespeople come to me and tell me that we needed to make it easier for skilled tradespeople to come and practice here in Alberta. In fact, there were thousands of unemployed electricians, unemployed carpenters, unemployed welders who were concerned that maybe the value of their trade ticket that they got here in Alberta was being diluted by people who were holding themselves out to be qualified in those trades when, in fact, they weren't and were practising those trades illegally.

In my time as Advanced Education minister I directed the department to crack down on the illegal use of people who were holding themselves out to be members of the trades but who didn't actually have tickets. I have to say that we met with some success. In the skilled trades, Madam Speaker, we found a lot of people who were practising trades when they, in fact, had no qualifications to do so. Certainly, the skilled tradespeople that I interacted with were thankful for that. It gave the people who had recognized qualifications the ability to go back to work. Of course, when people who aren't qualified to practise that work are not allowed to do that work, then people who are allowed to do that work will have an easier time finding a job.

I have to say that in my discussions with tradespeople from all across Alberta, they certainly had some questions around whether or not qualifications that were granted in other jurisdictions, even within Canada, were equivalent to our own. Alberta leads the country when it comes to the training of people in the certified trades and occupations. Our trades training system is recognized as one of the best in the world, Madam Speaker, and we want to be able to uphold that standard by making sure that everybody who is practising those trades meets our own standards. So when people come from other jurisdictions in the country or from other countries who don't meet those standards, they shouldn't be allowed to work until they can demonstrate that they meet those standards.

I think that if I heard any criticisms of the apprenticeship system, it was that maybe we didn't do a good enough job of assessing the qualifications of people from outside of the province. Certainly, the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board is engaged in that process, Madam Speaker. The ministry is engaged in that process. We don't need a fair registration practices office poking its nose into the Ministry of Advanced Education, telling welders how they should evaluate other welders or telling electricians how they should evaluate other electricians or telling carpenters how to evaluate other carpenters. The people in the Ministry of Advanced Education and on the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board are more than qualified to do that work already.

I don't think there's any additional value to be found in creating a fair registration practices office with people whose qualifications are unknown at this point. We don't know whether or not they can add any value to the registration processes that already exist. I would urge the members opposite to maybe reconsider using this as a way to improve the registration of people who want to work in the trades in Alberta and to perhaps just review the existing ministry procedures and the work of the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board to see if there are some internal efficiencies that could be found.

Now, it is without question, Madam Speaker, that there are times when people with foreign credentials in the trades are needed in Alberta, and the ministry has worked quite hard to identify those. In fact, every so often Alberta goes to Ireland to recruit welders, in particular, to come and work on short-term projects that require welders. We've had a long-standing relationship with the trades system in Ireland. It has worked very well. It has served the needs of the people of Alberta for a long time.

If we are looking to expand the reach of those programs, then it's not the creation of a fair registration practices office that will do that. It's actually the Minister of Advanced Education's office that will seek to identify other countries around the world where we could come up with agreements on equivalent trades qualifications, and we could have similar situations, where we could go to other countries and import for the short term people to come and work in the skilled trades whenever we have a skilled labour shortage in the future.

5:20

Now, I would recommend to the members opposite that that would probably be a better way, if we identify skilled trade shortages, to do that work: send people from the Ministry of Advanced Education to identify trades training systems around the world that are equivalent to our own and prequalify them so that they can come to work in Alberta on a short-term basis on relatively quick notice. That would meet the needs of industry much better than a fair registration practices office and would certainly be a much more efficient system than the one that's created here.

The other concern that I have is government poking its nose into areas where it doesn't belong, and that's into the self-regulating

professions. It's shocking to me, Madam Speaker, that a party that is supposedly the party of small government is creating an office to extend government's reach into areas it has no business reaching into, and that is the self-regulating professions.

I am not familiar with all of the organizations in schedule 1, but I am certainly very familiar with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta. I am a nonpractising member of that association. I practised as a geoscientist for a number of years prior to my election, and I actually had to go through the process of having my foreign credentials certified by that association because I was trained in Germany.

Now, it was not an easy process, Madam Speaker. It did take a long time. However, I was able to work as a geoscientist while I was waiting for my credentials to be assessed. They assessed me on a number of exams that I had to write to prove the equivalency of my qualifications. At the end of it all, I was able to satisfy the association that I had the qualifications to practise as a geoscientist here in Alberta. I was able to get my stamp and be able to hold myself out as a professional geoscientist here in the province of Alberta.

I understand that it's a frustrating process for a lot of people to go through. However, you know, in the case of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists it's up to them and it's up to their peers to decide what the fair registration process is and what qualifications an engineer or a geoscientist needs to be able to practise engineering or geoscience here in the province of Alberta. That's the whole premise upon which self-regulation of professions is built.

I am very concerned about a couple of sections of this act, and hopefully somebody from the opposite side can speak to these concerns if I have misplaced them. I'm looking at the bill here. Under Powers and Duties of the Minister, section 10(1):

- (b) for the purposes of determining compliance with this Act and the regulations, review the registration and assessment practices of regulatory bodies, including the use of third parties to assess the qualifications of applicants.

Madam Speaker, on the face of it, it certainly looks like this bill gives the power to the minister to go into the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta and tell them what their registration practices should be and tell them what qualifies a person to become an engineer or a geoscientist in the province of Alberta. Now, if that's not the intent of the bill, then perhaps we can amend it so that it makes it clear that we're only monitoring the activities of the associations and that we're not actually going to dictate to them the qualifications that the associations must have in order to qualify somebody to be a member of that association.

I am also very concerned, Madam Speaker, about the regulations. Under section 23(1)

the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations . . .

- (c) respecting additional powers, duties and functions of the Minister.

Now, this kind of clause comes up quite frequently in legislation. I can recall a number of occasions when we introduced legislation with this very clause or something similar. Of course, the members opposite would express their concerns that this clause gives the minister quite significant powers. I must echo those concerns and wonder openly about the kinds of additional powers, duties, and functions that the minister is seeking for himself in this case. Again, we're opening the door to the Member for Calgary-Varsity, or whoever the minister of the day will be, poking their nose into the regulation of self-regulating professions when that's not the case, Madam Speaker.

You know, I understand that the registration procedures for self-regulating professions are not easy to go through, that there are a

number of hoops that people have to go through, but we also have to understand that these professions have decided among a group of their peers what the qualifications are that a person needs to meet to become a member of that association, to work in that profession, and it's agreed upon by all of those people in that profession that those are the minimum qualifications.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Who are we as the government to tell members of that profession what qualifications their members need to have in order to become a member of that association? I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that government is not the proper authority for deciding what the qualifications of a member of that association are, that it is up to the members of those bodies themselves.

I hope that we can have those concerns addressed.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see that the Minister of Labour and Immigration has risen.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to just provide a few comments concerning the comments made by the members for Edmonton-North West and Edmonton-Gold Bar.

First of all, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-North West for, you know, recognizing that this is an issue. He heard about it, in terms of his consultation, as a serious issue that we actually need to address, and this is our first step in addressing it as part of our plan for newcomers to Alberta and part of our Alberta immigration strategy. So I want to thank him for that.

There were a number of questions raised by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I'd like to address just a couple of them for clarification and better understanding concerning the intent behind the bill. One comment, you know, made by the hon. member was that the bill doesn't do much, that there are not a lot of specific or actual details in regard to what is required. The intent of this bill, quite frankly, is as enabling legislation. As both members pointed out, there are well over 60 different professional regulatory bodies we're addressing here. This is not prescriptive legislation. Rather, it's enabling legislation to allow us to work with the regulatory bodies to ensure that their processes are fair, transparent, flexible, and efficient. Right?

One of the issues that we've heard from a number of immigrants is that they come to this country, and quite rightly we invite them in through the federal program. We nominate them because there's a skill shortage in Alberta. We need these skills to grow our economy. They're here because they have that skill set. They make an application to these regulatory bodies, and in certain cases there is no clear path forward. So one thing that this bill does with a great deal of clarity is that at least within the first six months, once they've provided the information and made the application to the regulatory body, they need a path forward, and that regulatory body will provide that path forward. And we do that.

Secondly, they have to have a response once they get the path forward. It's going to be different for every profession and for every individual because every individual will have a different set of experiences. They may have to go write different sets of exams or get more education in a particular area, which is fine and good. The legislation also says that the final decision needs to be rendered within a reasonable time frame. The act sets that out and also the code that all regulatory bodies must follow, and that deals with good governance issues.

I would submit to the hon. member opposite that this legislation, by necessity, isn't prescriptive because of the complexity of all the various different regulatory bodies but actually allows the minister to work with these regulatory bodies to ensure that processes are in

place which are fair and transparent, and it requires them to actually have those processes in place.

5:30

The second point I want to deal with is that the hon. member suggests that, you know, government is poking its nose where it doesn't belong, Mr. Speaker. I would like to point out again and to emphasize that these regulatory bodies are creatures of the province. They are established because it's of critical importance that these professions which provide services to all Albertans have the high-level certification and will get it right. We're talking about doctors. We're talking about veterinarians. We're talking about engineers. You don't want bridges falling down. You don't want people getting hurt in the services. They're of critical importance. So these professional regulatory bodies are actually established by the province to ensure the safety of Albertans and that they get the services that they deserve and they expect. So they are creatures of the province.

But we also need to ensure that there's good governance. The intent of this legislation is not to tell these regulatory bodies what the standards are. It is still up to the regulatory body to do that. We're not going to interfere. Actually, there are a number of provisions in the act which say: this is your choice. We don't want to get involved in this as government because, quite frankly, we can't; we don't have the expertise. What we can do and what this bill intends to do is to provide a high-level, overarching framework to ensure that the processes that all these different organizations have are fair and transparent; in essence, follow good governance principles.

We're not new to this game, right? There are other provinces who have done this before – Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia – and we are actually using this as our first step. Our intent is not to tell the regulatory bodies – and we're not doing that – and the regulatory powers that are in the act are not intended to tell them what the standards are but, rather, to ensure that their processes follow good governance principles.

The last thing that I'd like to just comment on and that the hon. member mentioned is section 10(1)(b). Again, the intent is to make sure that the processes are fair, not to tell the organizations what to do, and section 23(1)(c), again, is a standard clause to be able to do that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 11 at second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to rise and speak to Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. I was very pleased to hear the comments from my colleague the Member for Edmonton-North West, you know, that we do support common-sense legislation. I think we can all agree with that.

My parents were immigrants to this country. They were not covered in the fields of work that are covered under this legislation, but certainly they came at a time when a lot of people immigrated to this country, in 1968, with various skill sets and faced challenges, absolutely, finding work. My mother was actually a teacher in Tanzania before she came. I don't know to what extent she made efforts to teach here in Canada, but she ended up doing completely different work. I know she often regretted that she didn't choose to pursue teaching further in Canada.

Certainly, my life experience: my family is all formed from immigrants. We're all actually immigrants to this country. They've had this experience. This is not an unusual experience, where we've

heard about people coming from other countries who have incredible skill sets and that we would all benefit from them being able to contribute to our economy and our workforce in their area of skill and training and education. Actually, I really appreciated the comment that the Member for Edmonton-North West made, which was that it's not just about contributing to the economy but also about self-dignity because I think that's very important, really. I think that's one of the reasons why we've all heard those stories, because it is frustrating for those individuals who have incredible education and have invested a lot of their time in life training and having the skills to not be able to contribute. It's a loss for them as well. I certainly think that this is a good concept in this legislation.

I'm actually willing to indicate that I support this legislation that the government is bringing forward. I was pleased to hear that it is a carry-over or perhaps an extension of work that was begun under the previous government with taking action against racism. The Member for Edmonton-North West spoke very strongly about the work that was done as part of that consultation with many, many Albertans. I note that as part of that process, taking action against racism, the issue of valuing skills and recognizing expertise in the workplace was very much a key part of that consultation. There was definitely messaging that came out of that about how important it is. It is part of an antiracism strategy, that people who come from other countries should be able to have their work valued and their education valued.

I'm pleased to see this legislation come forward. I think it's something that I can support myself. I was actually pleased to see the professional organization that I'm a member of, which is the Law Society of Alberta, and I am still currently an active member of that organization. The law societies – and I'm not going to single out Alberta's – across Canada have historically imposed significant barriers on people being able to practise. Actually, they imposed those barriers even within Canada. It was very difficult for somebody to go from one province to the next and practise law, and we know that there were reasons for that.

The Member for Edmonton-North West spoke about that, about protecting their membership very tightly. In fact, the year that I graduated law school, which was 2004, just prior to that the national mobility agreement was signed between provinces in Canada to allow for even lawyers to go between provinces to practise, and I benefited from that because I was trained in Ontario and was called to the bar in Ontario, but then I was able to come home to Alberta and practise here without significant barriers whereas probably just a year or two prior there would have been significant barriers to my doing that. I would have had to article again. I would have had to do my bar exams all over again. That's just within Canada. That's just my experience there, but I can certainly say that it's a great thing to hear that the Law Society of Alberta would be encouraged – now, I know that there would probably be a lot of people who would say that the last thing we need is more lawyers in the world. Who doesn't love a good lawyer joke? I think it is a good thing for professional bodies to have a process and to have some criteria to consider when approached for qualification by members from outside of Alberta, outside of Canada.

I do take the heed and the caution that I think my colleagues on this side of the House mentioned, which is that it can be very challenging to work with professional organizations. I respect the comments from the minister of labour, which is that the intent of this bill is not to interfere in the professional regulatory responsibilities of those bodies, but it is going to a bit, as I'm sure the minister is anticipating. He's sort of saying that this is a first step. I think that is going to be where the challenge is going to lie, between respecting the autonomy and the authority of these professional

regulatory bodies to determine their own standards and criteria to make sure that they are fair.

We all have an interest, of course, as well in making sure that the people who are certified and qualified meet certain standards. We all expect that from all of the services that are provided by the individuals who are authorized under these bodies. We all have a value in that, and of course it is the obligation of those professional organizations to make sure that that is upheld. We do need to respect their autonomy and authority to do that; however, in order to make this work, there has to be some kind of oversight, and I think that's what the minister has recognized, that there is a role.

I do actually take the comment from my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar. I did think about this, which is that, you know, this is government. If it's not interference, it is certainly oversight into what has traditionally been something that government has stayed hands off of, but I think we can all see that this is an example of a situation where it is appropriate for government to play a role. I think we can agree that there are circumstances where government plays an appropriate role, and I look forward to seeing how this is implemented.

One of the questions that I had when I was reviewing the bill is that I note, of course, that there is certainly no mechanism within this for individuals to complain. I certainly don't see that this legislation is establishing in any way that the minister or – and I'm going to say the name wrong – the fair registration practices office will hear individual complaints from people stating that the professional body did not assess their qualifications in a timely manner.

Meanwhile, I defer to the minister of labour to perhaps correct me if I'm wrong, but it does not appear that there is an obligation on the professional bodies to report to the minister. To me a bit of the question lies with: how do we determine whether or not the professional organizations are complying? I mean, really, whenever we're talking about legislation – and, you know, not all legislation, not all areas that are covered by legislation require strict enforcement provisions. But a question that arose for me as I was reviewing the bill was: how do we determine whether or not the requirements for these professional organizations to assess qualifications for individuals within a timely manner and to have an appeal process – how do we confirm that that's actually being carried out? There are 60 organizations here. There is no duty to report on behalf of the professional – I do not see one – to the minister or to the office. There's no individual complaint process to the minister or to the fair registration practices office. I guess my question is going to be: how will we know how effective this process and this legislation will be?

5:40

Certainly, we see that part of the platform – and I think that's perhaps one of the reasons for the establishment of the associate ministry of red tape reduction. The government is intent on making sure that where we have legislation, where we have regulations, it is being enforced, it is useful, it is effective, and it is not simply red tape. The question I have about this one is: how will we know that that is happening? I'm not saying, by any means, that I think there should be individual complaint processes. I'm posing the question more than anything else. I do see that the minister has the authority to review the registration and assessment practices of regulatory bodies. That provision I think is in section 10 of the act. But I'm wondering what would trigger that review. How would the minister know that there is a review if there's no acceptance of individual complaints or there's no duty to report, which would raise an alarm or raise question marks for the minister? That's a question I have.

Of course, it is not the job of this House. Unfortunately, we do not review regulations in this body. But as I mentioned in my comments on another government bill, Bill 8, quite often the meat and bones and the devil are in the details. Details are not always bad. Regulations are not always bad. But, you know, I think we're venturing into uncharted waters a little bit here.

The substance of those regulations will be important to how this is actually executed. I think we'd all be interested in knowing what those regulations are and how they're developed and who's been consulted on that. Again, the reference has been made to the delicate dance that's sometimes done between professional bodies and government. I imagine that those professional organizations will want an opportunity to weigh in on the regulations in particular. Of course, with so many bodies, you know, some of them more sophisticated than others in terms of their organization and advocacy – just a fair opportunity for them to raise their questions and comments.

I'm not sure yet whether the minister has indicated – and my apologies, Minister, if you had mentioned this. I'm not sure if you've received feedback from professional bodies in response to the introduction of this legislation, if your sense is that they are supportive or at least understanding of the purposes and intent and are, you know, onboard with compliance. I mean, I understand that when legislation is established, they will be expected to comply no matter what, but certainly their feedback with respect to the impact on their organization – maybe for some of them it will not be difficult to comply with this. For some of them it might be that it is or that maybe they simply don't even get a lot of applications from individuals who need their certification assessed.

For some of them I can imagine this will be a substantial amount of work. I'm not familiar with, say, as an example, what the timeline for the College of Physicians & Surgeons right now would be and the timeline that's now in the legislation. How significant of a difference is that? You know, is this going to significantly impact what they're currently doing? I'd be interested to know what the feedback has been from some of these organizations on this. Going back to that comment of the right balance, the more resistant organizations might be, the more challenging it will be to enforce this.

I mean, overall I think I can say that I look forward to seeing what the regulations will look like on this legislation. As a child of immigrants myself and somebody who has a lot of people in my family and circle of friends who are highly qualified and have come to this country – and I think that's the case for a lot of my constituents as well. I can say that. I think that any opportunities that we have to value and recognize the skills of the people who have come to this country, who have often worked very hard to come to this country and to this province to work, to value those skills and education and put them to work not only for the value it brings to our economy but to their human dignity, that is incredibly important.

I'm optimistic, and I'm hopeful that this legislation will be effective. These are just some questions I have. I'd like to say thank you for the opportunity to speak to this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The Minister of Labour and Immigration has risen to make a brief question or comment.

Mr. Copping: I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for her comments. Also, she raised a number of questions, and I'd like to try to address that as part of this right now.

I agree that, you know, there is a huge range, looking at the number of regulatory bodies. Some are highly sophisticated, and quite frankly they are doing this already. So this will be no change. There are others who tend to be, actually, a lot smaller, who don't have the resources and may require some work for this.

In terms of the timing the intent behind the proclamation is that we're not going to proclaim this until we've had an opportunity to have detailed conversations with all the regulatory bodies. The intent is that by the end of this year we have the conversation, but we fully expect – the key requirement is that they have their processes in place or at least they're en route to get the processes in place that are fair and impartial – that they actually hit that, you know, six-month interim deadline or at least a minimum of six months. That six months is actually common in other codes, and our understanding is that most are hitting that right now because there are certain organizations already that provide in their annual reports reporting on these types of issues, right?

I just want to go to a couple of other issues that you asked for concerning feedback from regulatory bodies. The feedback in the main has generally been very positive. When we announced this, we had a town hall. All the regulatory bodies were invited. I don't know the exact number, but there were, like, 40 to 50 that were on the call. They indicated their support with this, that this is the right direction and that they want to actually work with us to do that. That's what this enabling legislation does. It provides an opportunity for the fair registration practices office to work with all the organizations to make sure that these processes are in place.

You asked the question in regard to: well, where is it in the act that gives us the power to do a couple of things, like, for example, with appeals? Now, you're right; the fair registration practices office is not a complaint office. However, the act does, in item 7, require that each organization, regulatory body, has an internal review or appeal process and that it must be a third party, it must be a clear process. But it's not the fair registration practices office making the decision; it's still the body because they are the ones who actually have to apply it. But they need to have a clear process that's fair. If you don't like the decision that they made, you can actually appeal that.

Then if you actually go to item 17, the report to the minister, regulatory bodies are required to report. I'll be tabling – actually, I will not be. On my behalf Mr. Speaker will be tabling a number of annual reports over the next few weeks, and you'll actually see in them that they'll actually say: these are the number of applications made, these were what was rejected, these are the appeals that were done, and here's what the outcome of the appeals was. Not all of them have it, but a number of them have it in their reports. We will require that through the act they actually report on this so we can actually understand that.

Then, well, how do you make sure? The next question, which is a good question, which I'm sure you would ask if you had the mic right now, is: okay; how do we make sure that they were actually reporting this stuff, right? Well, then you go back to item 16, which is audit powers for the fair registration practices office to actually go in and audit and do this.

But, again, you're right. There is a dance here. My expectation and the expectation of the office is that the regulatory bodies are largely in support of this, and they actually see the benefit not only for themselves but for the entire economy. They want to work with us to do that. Then our first step will be a conversation with them: what's working, what's not working, try to put that in place. Then we proclaim it. Ongoing reporting: some will be perfectly fine and doing it very well, and others we may have to use more extensive involvement orders, hopefully not fines. We may have to go down that road, but our sense is, you know, that we're not going to start

there. We're going to start at the very front, which is, "Where are you at? Let's do the reporting. Let's work together to make this happen for the benefit of the society, for the immigrants," which, you noted, is critically important, "and for all Albertans and the economy."

Thanks very much for your questions.

The Speaker: We are still on 29(2)(a). If anyone would like to make a question or comment on 29(2)(a), there's about a minute left.

Ms Pancholi: I would just like to thank the minister of labour for the feedback. It's a breath of fresh air to be able to actually engage constructively on some of the legislation. It has not been the case so far, so I'd like to thank the minister of labour for his forthcoming responses.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? We're on 29(2)(a) still. There are approximately 30 seconds left.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen to speak to the main bill.

5:50

Member Ceci: Thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 11, and thank you to the members for Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-North West and, indeed, Edmonton-Whitemud for their review of this bill and discussion with you, Mr. Minister. I can see the benefit of the Fair Registration Practices Act, especially with regard to many new Canadians that come to Canada looking for an opportunity to participate in their chosen professions and find it challenging from time to time to wind their way through the myriad of regulations, that sometimes they have to when they go to one of the colleges.

I guess I would have a couple questions that hopefully the minister will have an opportunity to address. What does he anticipate from the feedback from listening and sharing with the 40 or 50 colleges and regulatory bodies with regard to their dues or fees? Have they given him any indication that those might be going up as a result of the additional requirements that are identified in the fair registration practices code? For instance, right now I think the last time I paid social work dues to the Alberta College of Social Workers, it was about \$500, and I'm not sure exactly how they go through and evaluate the qualifications of social workers from other provinces and other countries to essentially allow those social workers to challenge registration and become professionally accredited in this province. But I wonder if there would be a concern that was brought forward with regard to the colleges and regulatory bodies across the province with regard to their dues going up as a result of this and if the province is addressing that in any fashion.

Also, I can wonder if this is the full extent of colleges and regulatory bodies in the province. I think the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said that there were 60 here. I didn't count them all, but I wonder if there are any that are currently in Alberta and self-regulating that have been left out. It doesn't look like it in the main, but I may be wrong.

With regard to something like Horse Racing Alberta I just wonder why that's here as well. I'm not sure who's being regulated in that regard.

Those would be some questions that I could see needing to be answered in advance of voting on this, but as I heard my colleagues and from your explanation, I think it is beneficial for there to be clear processes for newcomers and others who want to work in their profession. I think there is a great amount of capacity that's

underutilized as a result of people not being able to work in their profession.

I do know that if it's clearer and people approach their regulatory body, it may address some of the perhaps unrealistic expectations some individuals have when they have approached me and others saying that, you know, they could do this job, but clearly they may not have the qualifications that are identified in these regulatory bodies to do the job. So they could get that feedback sooner instead of holding on to that hope when it is possible they may need additional education, additional time to upgrade their skills before they actually practise. But many people hold on to the hope of working in their professions, and I think anything that clears that avenue up for them to get that feedback in a clear way is not a bad thing to do.

Maybe I'll just stop there. Thank you.

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

Mr. Copping: I'd like thank the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for his comments. Just in terms of feedback there have been no concerns raised at this point in time from a fee standpoint. As indicated before in my earlier remarks, a lot of the organizations are doing this already. Some may need some assistance in terms of the proper management, in terms of what processes are put in place, and that's what the purpose of the office will do.

On your couple of other questions I'll have to get back to you. Thank you.

The Speaker: Is there anyone else on Standing Order 29(2)(a) that would like to make a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, is there anyone wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Opposition House Leader has risen.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. It's no surprise, I'm sure, to members of the Assembly that I have a similar opinion to many of my colleagues that have preceded me today. I want to start off by thanking the hon. minister for jumping

up and addressing questions. I know that often it doesn't happen in second reading. It's easier to do in Committee of the Whole, but I appreciate him taking the time to give some thoughtful responses to the questions that my colleagues are proposing.

I, too, you know, recognize the fact that immigrants have made incredible contributions to our province. They make incredible sacrifices, and quite frankly I don't think our province would function without the support of immigrants that come to Alberta. We know that we're, I believe, one of the youngest provinces in the country, one of the fastest growing provinces, and that's been the case for a number of years. So I appreciate that I often hear, from constituents who have come from all over, talk about the frustration with trying to get their credentials recognized and to get to work in areas that, one, are needed, that there's a shortage of skilled workers in a number of different professions and fields.

I find it a tragedy that you have many that have been practising a profession in their original countries or country, that they've come from, and they come here and hit roadblock after roadblock. In fact, I engage in conversations with people regularly to discover that. So I appreciate the intention, what this bill is trying to do.

I know that colleagues of mine have had a number of questions. I appreciate the fact that with this piece of legislation the minister is working with organizations, in fact, many, many different organizations, that will be affected by this to ensure that these entities – and again there are lots of the different colleges and different associations – will be able to do their part in helping to expedite this process.

I do know that quite a lot of detail will be coming in the regulations, which some of my colleagues, especially from Edmonton-North West and Edmonton-Whitemud, identified as some of their questions as far as the details of how the legislation will actually work . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 4(4) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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