



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 26, 2019

Day 20

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

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

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

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

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Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk  
and Senior Parliamentary Counsel  
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
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Nancy Robert, Research Officer  
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
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Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

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

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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

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

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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

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

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

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

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, joining us this afternoon in the Speaker's gallery is another familiar face to the Chamber, the former Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, Mr. Oneil Carlier.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this afternoon we have a group of hard-working public service employees in our galleries from the Ministry of Service Alberta. Thank you for all you do. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members, in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon: the father of the Member for Banff-Kananaskis, Mr. Murray Rosin.

A special guest of mine – you can feel free to rise if you'd like – in the gallery is a member who's very keen on the parliamentary process, a young member, Seth Bourke.

Guests of the Minister of Health: Andrew Neuner and Jessica Gish.

Also joining us today are guests of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: Zahra Somani, Sameer Thawer, Mohib Samnani, Moe Rahemtulla, Amin Poonja, Shafin Kanji, Arif Karmali, Farah Jivraj, and Naz Hasham.

I'd invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs would like to make a statement.

#### Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day, June 27, which the teal ribbon represents. In 2016 I was honoured to bring forward a private member's bill that would acknowledge PTSD Awareness Day annually. It was introduced and passed, all in the span of 18 days. It was incredible to be a part of that moment, when all of my colleagues sitting in 2016 made this a nonpartisan issue and allowed the bill to become a reality.

Mr. Speaker, posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD, is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event, either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

The consultation process was a monumental opportunity to hear from Albertans on the impacts of PTSD. I heard repeatedly that more supports were needed within the mental health system. I advocated for this with my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora. The recent opening of the Addiction & Mental Health Access 24/7 clinic at the Royal Alexandra hospital is just one example of how our previous government made a commitment to prioritizing and funding Albertans' mental health care.

The subject of conversion therapy also came up during these consultations. We know that conversion therapy can cause PTSD, yet the current Minister of Health, the very person in charge of protecting patients from harmful practices in Alberta, not only disbanded but also stated that he will not support the working group going forward.

Despite how this government has responded to that situation, I want to be very clear with my message. To all who are impacted by PTSD: you are not alone. We will continue to fight for your mental health services and continue to put action behind our words.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Cross has a statement.

#### Imamat Day

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise before you today to speak about Imamat Day. On July 11 Ismaili Muslims from across the world and, in fact, in our province come together to mark the anniversary of the ascension of His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV to the throne of the Imamat. This day of celebration is dedicated to strengthening one's spirituality and reaffirming one's commitment to the Ismaili doctrine of the Shia Islamic faith.

It has been 62 years since His Highness Aga Khan became the 49th imam and the spiritual leader of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims. Throughout this time the Aga Khan and the Canadian government have been steadfast allies in the promotion of important causes such as international development, human rights, and pluralism. Likewise, the Aga Khan has devoted his personal efforts to addressing important humanitarian causes such as the eradication of poverty, increasing accessibility to education, and providing the basic necessities of life, including health care and water, to the people in his care and to those all across the globe.

This vital partnership was memorialized in 2010 by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who rewarded the Aga Khan with an honorary Canadian citizenship. It is important to note that after receiving this honour from our Prime Minister, the Aga Khan became the first spiritual leader to address both Houses of our Canadian Parliament.

Today we offer our warmest congratulations to His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV on the 62nd anniversary of his ascension as imam. On behalf of our province and the United Conservative Party of Alberta we wish to extend our best thoughts and wishes to Ismaili Muslims across the province on this holiest of days. It is our honour to wish Ismaili Albertans that are practising Imamat Day our sincerest Khushiali Mubarak.

#### Lethbridge Pride Fest

**Ms Phillips:** This past weekend I attended Lethbridge pride along with about 3,000 or 4,000 other people. The weather held up for the indigenous hoop dancer, for the drag shows from kings and queens alike, for the local food vendors and, importantly, the beer gardens. It was the biggest Pride Fest yet. Lethbridge pride has grown from a potluck in a park to one of the biggest summer festivals in Galt

Gardens, and Lethbridge has inspired pride events in Cardston, Taber, and Fort Macleod. This year almost a thousand people signed my petition to protect LGBTQ youth from being outed for joining a GSA. People lined up to sign the petition.

On Friday I also attended the pride awards. This year Levi Cox got the legacy award for his 20 years of service in building Pride Fest into what it is today. Deonie Hudson and Jo-Anne Finch both received awards that recognized their respective and distinct records of service and support. Kari Tanaka received the award on behalf of the University of Lethbridge Bookstore. Jordan Payne was recognized for his contributions to Theatre Outré and Club Didi. ARCHES received an award for community health and well-being, and Cyndi Starzyk-Frey won for her work in counselling. Tate Montgomery and Indira Brower were recognized as emerging leaders. Pride wouldn't happen without a volunteer board, and they are Glen Herbst, Levi Cox, Tyler Gschaider, Katherine Culley, Jesse Harsanyi, Elisabeth Hegerat, Austin Walsh, Dave Fritz, Carter Cannady, Linda McFalls, and Mac Miles.

Pride is about more than events. It's about politics. You don't just show up once a year for a pretty picture with rainbows. Substantive support to the community is what's required. I was honoured to help enact equality rights whenever I had the chance in government, and the community can continue to count on my voice in this Legislature and wherever else they need it. I take my promise and my responsibility to the queer community in southern Alberta very seriously.

Happy pride, Lethbridge. You will always count on my support, my love, and my solidarity.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

#### 1:40 Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The pipeline is not intended to grow production, just diversify markets: those were the words spoken by the Prime Minister in French, then reiterated by both his Finance and environment ministers when the federal government approved the TMX project for the second time. The pipeline file has been mismanaged by the Trudeau government since they took office, in the fall of 2015.

Last week we got confirmation of what many of us feared: this isn't a pipeline being approved to grow a provincial economy; this was a political attempt to placate Alberta until after the federal election in October. While I appreciate the federal government approval of TMX, again, neither I nor Albertans will be tricked into believing that the Trudeau government is doing anything special for our province. After four years of attacks, with bills C-48, C-69, the cancellation of Northern Gateway, and the stifling of Energy East, it is clear that he is no friend to Alberta. When asked if they would approve additional pipelines, the Prime Minister snickered and passed off to Minister Morneau, who stated that this was the only one they were focused on. With bills C-48 and C-69 passing through the House of Commons only two days after the TMX approval, the foreshadowing from the federal government seems clear.

Alberta is in a precarious position. Our economy is showing signs of optimism since the UCP election win, but our province must continue to be vigilant against Ottawa and their interference in our economy. This pipeline must be built. The fight is not over. We cannot celebrate until barrels are flowing through that pipeline and bills C-48 and C-69 are repealed. Brian Mulroney once said: Trudeau's contribution was not to build Canada but to destroy it. Mr. Speaker, it appears that Justin Trudeau is following in the footsteps of his father.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

#### Constables Ezio Faraone and Daniel Woodall

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 25, 1990, Edmonton Police Service member Constable Ezio Faraone was killed in the line of duty while responding to an armed robbery. Constable Faraone's sacrifice that day should stand as a reminder to us all of the risk our front-line responders take every day. It is important to recognize also that some of the members of the Legislature security staff worked with Constable Faraone and were members of the Edmonton Police Service when he was killed.

The Legislature security service is comprised of retired members of the Edmonton Police Service and the RCMP. Several of those members were Constable Faraone's friends and colleagues. Three of them were working with Constable Faraone in the tactical unit the day he was killed. Constable Faraone is described as a man of honour, a great friend and family man, and a colleague.

On June 8, 2015, Constable Dan Woodall was shot and killed while executing a search warrant. I worked with Constable Woodall. He was my partner on numerous shifts, and I had the privilege of getting to know a dedicated police officer, father, and husband.

Constable Faraone and Constable Woodall were responding to calls that I, the Member for Calgary-West, many members of the Legislature security staff, and police officers across Alberta have responded to. When Constable Woodall and Constable Faraone died, the outpouring of support from the community was amazing to see and feel. It was a reminder to us all in law enforcement of how much the community cares and appreciates the work we do. We should take time to reflect on their sacrifices and the sacrifice their families made that day.

To the Edmonton Police Service family and to all law enforcement across Alberta and around the country: thank you for the risk you take, the dedication you have to your communities, your towns and cities, and your province. In the face of such tragedy and loss the least we can do is keep them in our memory, to not forget to honour the lives they lived and the positive effects they had on all the lives they touched and the sacrifice they made for us all.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

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

The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has a statement to make.

#### Airdrie Pro Rodeo

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the honour of rising in this House to highlight an amazing event in my constituency, the Airdrie Pro Rodeo. This great event starts this Friday, June 28, and goes until Canada Day. Every year thousands gather to watch the rodeo, participate in family events, and just enjoy the festivities. At the grounds there will be something for everyone: kids' activities, food trucks, beer gardens, and even live entertainment.

The Airdrie Pro Rodeo is one of the 10 largest rodeos in all of Canada and is Airdrie's longest standing athletic event, dating back to 1967. The junior rodeo aspects provide an opportunity for future cowboys and cowgirls to test out their skills in activities like mutton busting, wild pony race, and the sheep scramble while the pro rodeo attracts some of the best athletes in the nation to compete in bull riding, steer wrestling, barrel racing, and many other events.

The five-day rodeo is organized by the Airdrie Rodeo Ranch Association, a not-for-profit, 100 per cent volunteer-driven group. They are committed to preserving our rural connection and

promoting our great community. They believe that while Airdrie grows in size, it is important that we don't lose our rural roots. This growing event is a pillar for community achievement and wouldn't be possible without all the dedicated volunteers. This event offers our city a unique tradition to celebrate and be proud of.

I want to encourage everyone across the province to come on out and support this fantastic event. I couldn't think of a better place to spend this long weekend. Canada Day in Airdrie will kick off with an awesome parade at 10 a.m., followed by the bull-riding bonanza at 2:30. It's sure to be an amazing event, and I hope to see y'all there.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 13 Alberta Senate Election Act

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move first reading of Bill 13, Alberta Senate Election Act.

Last week's passage of Bill C-48, a prejudicial attack on Alberta, and Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill, made it clear to us that elected Senators who are accountable to Alberta voters are more likely to defend our province's interests. This bill is based on the version of the Senate election law that expired in 2016, and passing it would restore Albertans' opportunity to directly participate in choosing Senate nominees.

The Alberta Senate Election Act will continue Alberta's push for the democratization of the Canadian Senate so that Alberta's Senators have a mandate from Albertans to be effective voices for our province in the federal Parliament. I look forward to sharing the details of the bill with the Legislature during second reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** It's my first day, hon. members.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South is rising to make a tabling.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and table a letter I received that was addressed to myself, the hon. Premier, and yourself, Mr. Speaker. It's in regard to the lack of decorum in the Alberta Legislature. It refers to Earpluggate, and it says that she is "disgusted by this disgraceful degradation of our Legislative Assembly."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, just to correct the record here.

Last night during my speech I mentioned the NDP's Leap Manifesto, where it mentions tanker bans and no more pipelines. It could have been penned by Justin Trudeau himself.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table the appropriate number of copies of a document entitled Zurich Signs up to UN Business Pledge to Limit Global Temperature Rise and Announces It Will Use Only Renewable Energy by 2022. This

document states that Zurich insurance will no longer underwrite oil sands operations.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of correspondence that I received in my constituency office regarding the distribution of earplugs in this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members. [interjections] It's okay. We're moving on, and we'll return to tablings.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### 2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, here we go again. It seems we really can't go for long without another member of this cabinet being questioned by the RCMP about voter fraud in the 2017 UCP leadership contest. Yesterday we learned from the media – from the media – that the Infrastructure minister was interviewed by the RCMP about this scandal. Last time it was the Attorney General questioned. We also found that out from the media. To the Premier: will he please advise or direct his Minister of Infrastructure to come clean with Albertans about his role in this issue?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, regrettable but entirely predictable to see the NDP's smear tactics continue on a daily basis. My understanding is that the minister was asked for an interview, was told that he is not subject to any investigation, and co-operated, as we've always indicated any member of this government will do.

Mr. Speaker, the real issue that the NDP doesn't want to talk about is how last night they voted to defend the Trudeau carbon tax on Alberta by voting against our motion to seek support from this Assembly, to stand up for Alberta taxpayers. While this government is defending Alberta taxpayers, they're defending their close ally Justin Trudeau.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP are investigating. Now, this Premier may want to diminish the importance of law and order by distraction or name-calling, but the fact is that these are serious issues, and Albertans deserve to have their government take them seriously. In that vein, it is wrong that Albertans keep discovering the growing web of UCP cabinet ministers being questioned as part of this fraud investigation through the media. To the leader: will he rise today and assure the House that no other members of Executive Council have been questioned about this fraud investigation?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, not to my knowledge. It was always said that ministers will co-operate if they've been asked for information. I understand in this case that the minister had, really, no relevant information to offer. It was a brief interview. He's not subject to any investigation. It's unfortunate that the opposition leader is trying to drag this honourable man's name through the mud, but we can expect nothing less from an NDP leader who still cannot identify a single mistake made by her government that rendered her the first-ever one-term Premier defeated by voters in the next election.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is precisely because we get answers like that from the Premier that it is so important that this government appoint a special prosecutor to objectively and independently guide the investigation and ultimate decision around

charges and, of course, the fact that the Attorney General was also a witness and a participant in the event under investigation. But it's been four weeks, and we haven't heard a peep. To the Attorney General: why haven't you publicly announced the name and appointment of the special prosecutor yet?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'd refer the hon. member to the RCMP for a commentary regarding their investigation. It's my understanding, through the department, that they've reached out to folks in Ontario to handle legal advice that the RCMP may need with respect to this matter.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, reaching out for advice is not the same as appointing a special prosecutor, and that is what the people of this province were promised. If what we are doing now is backpedalling on that commitment, will the Attorney General please rise and clarify for the people of Alberta: who is the special prosecutor? Why won't you announce their name?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate and clarify for the hon. member. Ontario has been asked to provide legal advice. The title of that could be special prosecutor. It's external legal advice to the RCMP. I'd refer them again to the RCMP if they have further questions with respect to their independent investigation. Again, we respect the police and their independence in this matter.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Ontario is not a person. I mean, I hate to break it to the Attorney General. A special prosecutor is a person. They are a person who is held accountable. They are a person who Albertans can know is separate and objective and independent from this government. Why won't the Attorney General announce the name? And will he assure us that it's not the Premier of Ontario, heaven forbid?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, the assistant deputy minister for our department had made a public statement regarding how they were handling this matter in referring it to the province of Ontario for legal advice, to the RCMP regarding this. Again, this is just another instance where they simply do not want to be held accountable for their record in 2015. They're just continuing to bring up things from the past. We're focused on the priorities of Albertans, which is jobs, the economy, and pipelines.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the government's record is that they said that they would appoint a special prosecutor, and, God knows, it is necessary because far too many members of Executive Council have been drawn into this investigation into allegations of conspiracy to commit fraud. As a result, it is critically important that the name of the special prosecutor be provided to the people of Alberta. Why won't the Attorney General do his job?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned many other times here today, I'd refer them again to the statement that was made by our department regarding providing for the service of a special prosecutor from the province of Ontario. If they're looking for further details regarding this investigation, I'd refer them again – again, numerous times – to talk to the RCMP regarding their independent investigation regarding this. We respect that independence of the RCMP. I would hope that this hon. member would respect that as well.

**Mr. Dach:** Name the prosecutor.

**The Speaker:** Oh. The Member for Edmonton-McClung will come to order.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

### Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, school boards are being forced to make cuts because this Education minister is failing to do her job. The reality is that with the loss of things like the classroom improvement fund there will be fewer dollars, and it will have an impact on our schools: that's a superintendent, Darrel Robertson, from Edmonton public schools, speaking yesterday when they voted on their budget. In his words, quote: there's no sugar-coating that. So I'll make this short. Will the government provide certainty to school boards so they don't have to guess where you're planning to cut?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. People need to stop with their scare tactics and stop playing politics with our children. Our government has committed to funding education and supports for our students, and enrolment growth will be accounted for and funded. As a standard procedure funding information will be communicated to school boards following the approval by the Legislature. We know that. They know that.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** It's totally irresponsible for the Minister of Education, a former school board chair, to stand in this place and say that they'll just have to wait, Mr. Speaker. School is out this week. Staff are being terminated across this province because of this government's dithering. Is this minister sleeping well at night knowing that there'll be more students and fewer teachers? As I can tell you, trustees with Edmonton public aren't. They're talking about staying up all night because they're stressed out by what you're inflicting on their board.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. People need to stop with the scare tactics. I just said it; I'll say it again. They need to stop playing politics with our children. This is about improving outcomes for Alberta students. We spend among the most per capita on education, but the outcomes just aren't there. So we are continuing to keep the system whole.

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** To manage the massive degree of uncertainty facing the Edmonton public school board, they've pulled millions of dollars out of reserves to balance the 2019-20 budget. To the Premier: if school boards are forced to go into reserves to fund your government's incompetence here, how will they make up the difference next year? Will they (a) get more funding, (b) get a new minister, or (c) both?

**Member LaGrange:** Again with the scare tactics. Our government has committed to funding education and supports for our students. Funding enrolment growth will be accounted for. We will be building schools. We are working on improving these outcomes for students, something the NDP failed to do. We are going to get it right.

Thank you.



### **LGBTQ Teacher and Educational Staff Employment Protection**

**Member Irwin:** A school that is not a safe and welcoming space for gender minority teachers cannot be a safe and welcoming space for gender minority students: that was the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association today, calling on this government to include employment protections for LGBTQ teachers and staff, and I hope that it would be a message that everyone in this House can embrace. Our government took it seriously and included employment protections in Bill 24. Sadly, those protections do not appear in Bill 8. To the Minister of Education: why did you remove employment protections for LGBTQ teachers and staff in the hateful Bill 8?

2:00

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We are all about protecting our children and our staff. Our government will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for our LGBTQ students in Canada. We continue to say it; we will always say it.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Listen carefully: we strongly urge this government to adopt amendments to Bill 8 that would see these protections continue. That again was the president of the ATA voicing his concern about the removal of employment protections for LGBTQ teachers and staff in Bill 8. To the Minister of Education again. Let's hope that this was an oversight rather than another attack on the LGBTQ community from this government. I ask you: will you commit in the next 35 seconds to restoring the employment protections that you removed?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. All our staff are protected under the human bill of rights and under the labour code. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we heard the question; we'll hear the answer.

The hon. Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We protect all our staff under the human bill of rights and also under the labour code. All of our staff are protected.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** We know that this government has a bad track record when it comes to protecting LGBTQ teachers. The Premier was a vocal opponent of the Vriend decision, going as far as to call that landmark case a virus of judicial activism. The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon even wrote a policy paper suggesting that schools should be allowed to fire LGBTQ teachers. To the Minister of Education: why won't you commit to standing up for LGBTQ teachers? Is it because you think that people like me don't belong in classrooms?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Education minister answered that question not once but twice already inside this Assembly.

**Ms Hoffman:** No, she didn't.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** I know that the deputy Leader of the Opposition continues to heckle and act inappropriate in the House during

question period. That's unfortunate, but the Education minister already answered that.

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that this is an attempt by the opposition to distract from the fact that last night they stood in this House and voted with Justin Trudeau, voted yet again against the people of Alberta.

**Ms Notley:** That is so disrespectful to those kids and those teachers.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** That's the history. That's the history of the Leader of the Opposition, who's now heckling and using inappropriate language inside this place, Mr. Speaker, standing with Justin Trudeau against Albertans. That's the NDP way. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** We will have order.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

### **Domestic Violence Prevention**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans deserve to feel safe. Unfortunately, not everyone does, particularly in my riding of Airdrie-East, where many are affected by domestic violence and have been left behind by the justice system. Victims need protection from those who have victimized them. They need a government that stands up for victims' rights and protects this vulnerable group in society, many of whom are women and children. Minister, can you please tell my constituents what this government is doing to protect victims of domestic violence?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, and thank you very much for the question. We were elected on a platform commitment to protect vulnerable women and girls, people generally. We know that call crises are up by 10 per cent across the last few years in Alberta, and those at risk of being murdered by an intimate partner – I along with my colleague from Community and Social Services as well as other members in this Assembly were proud to have opened the provincial One Line number, the 24-hour call tech service. It's in over 200 languages.

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

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a United Conservative promise during the campaign was to provide \$2 million in funding to expand the use of electronic monitoring or ankle bracelets for those convicted of domestic assault and given that this has been a successful pilot program running in Red Deer, can the minister tell us how this promise will protect victims of domestic violence and when we can see this program expanded right across the province?

**The Speaker:** The minister of status of women.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much. I don't have a timeline for you as of this point in time. We are reviewing the pilot program. It was a very successful pilot program. Thank you so much for the question. The more important piece about this is that the ankle bracelets actually create a virtual fence. What ends up happening is that any victim that has had this particular situation happen to them doesn't have to look over their shoulder every day when they're going to work, when they're doing their jobs, taking their children to school, or any of those other things. These protections are highly necessary to make sure that victims have a high quality of life.

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

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much, Minister, for that answer. Given that research shows that homicides against women are often preceded by domestic violence by an intimate partner and given that we know that information sharing saves lives and that a United Conservative campaign promise was to enact a version of Clare's law in order to protect future victims, can the minister provide us more details on how our government plans to fulfill this commitment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services has risen.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the hon. member for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to taking meaningful action to end the cycle of abuse and violence in Alberta. In addition to maintaining funding for women's shelters, we will also be introducing an Alberta version of Clare's law, which will allow those at risk of domestic violence to receive information about an intimate partner's history of violence. This information will provide individuals with a better understanding of the potential risks of remaining in a potentially abusive relationship.

### Agricultural Exports to China

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, this week the government of China took the shocking step of banning all Canadian meat exports, putting the livelihoods of thousands of Alberta farmers at risk. We know that Alberta has world-class farmers and the most rigorous food safety standards in the world. Producers are rightfully demanding that this government take action and fight this ban. To the minister: why have you not committed to more concrete action to ensure that our producers are not penalized by China's moratorium on our products?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can inform the member opposite in this House that I have talked to the federal agriculture minister yesterday. It is unfortunate, it is actually very disappointing, and farmers are quite concerned with the export certificates for beef and for pork that have been cancelled to China. All ongoing shipments to China that are en route right now will actually be honoured. However, any existing ones going forward are something that – we're working with CBSA and the RCMP and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to make sure that if there's anything we as a province can do to help in this investigation, we'll offer those services.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that multiple media outlets have suggested that this is a politically motivated attack as a result of the detainment of the CFO of Chinese company Huawei and given that this is an important issue that must be dealt with immediately, to the same minister: what will you personally do today to ensure that these unfair bans on our products are lifted? Are you looking for other markets? Surely you're doing something and have ideas that you can bring forward today.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to opening up global markets for our farmers. We export a tremendous amount here in Alberta. We produce high-quality foodstuffs that the world needs and wants. With a growing population, we need to find more markets around the world so we can get our high-quality products to feed the world – the minister of trade, actually, a couple of weeks ago was in Korea and Japan trying to open up markets and gain more market access for our farmers there – and it's something that this government has committed to do.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I note that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry wasn't at that trade conference.

Given that this government has been so focused on earplugs and unconstitutional attacks on public-sector workers that they are forgetting to do the actual work of protecting and advocating for our key industries, to the same minister: given that China may soon target other critical agricultural industries in Alberta, what specific supports will you provide farmers to protect them from these international trade disputes on a proactive basis?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, we will look at if there are any damages done from this trade issue, but right now it's too early to tell. The farmers, their crops, and everything: we haven't actually seen any impacts on them, but it is something that we'll closely monitor. We'll work with farmers to see if there is any economic harm.

It's a little rich coming from that side of the House, about economic trade, because it's something where you had a former economic trade and development minister who in this very House said that if farmers and businesses were having trouble paying the carbon tax, they need to look at their own management.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is rising.

2:10

### Public Health Care

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve to have fair access to health care regardless of the depth of their pockets. That's why I was so dismayed to see Bill 203, which would ban block billing for insurance services in the province of Alberta, be killed by government members in committee. The practice of block billing for health services represents an affront to public health care and seems to fly directly in the face of this Premier's so-called public health guarantee. To the Premier: won't you come clean and admit that you have no plan to keep public health care in this province and that credit card medicine is on the horizon?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier and our government have been clear that we stand for public health care. We'll continue to protect public health care.

The hon. member is referring to a standing committee that the Premier is not a member of. I do look forward to hearing the recommendations from that private members' committee when they send those recommendations to the House for a decision by all of this Assembly. I guess, from what the hon. member is saying, there may be a recommendation not to proceed with this bill. I'll be interested to see why the committee thought that it was the right decision, and then we'll see if the House agrees with the committee's decision.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that government members limited debate on Bill 203 to 30 minutes at most in committee yesterday and given that those members would not even let the bill proceed to this House for normal, regular debate, to the Premier: won't you admit that this new process of taking private members' bills through committee is really just a way to kill all legislation offered by the Official Opposition?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, that committee is designed to be able to expedite lots of private members' motions.

But, again, when it comes to the member, Albertans have got to ask if they can really trust what he's saying. He just said there that the government members of that standing committee went out of their way to limit debate for 30 minutes when, in fact, I'm informed that it was all members of the committee . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** You just said that they weren't government yesterday.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** . . . all members of the committee – despite the fact that the deputy leader of the NDP wants to heckle and say rude things even during that, those are the facts of what took place during the committee. Again, Albertans should ask: can they really trust that member?

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this Premier has insulted health care workers and given that my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre pointed out yesterday that the Minister of Health has tried to claim just this week that front-line health care workers aren't putting patient care first, to the Premier: you're really just setting up our public health care system, aren't you, for cuts and privatization? Why won't you just admit it?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Again, the Premier and our government have been clear. We stand for public health care. We're going to work hard to make sure that our system can continue to provide the services that Albertans expect. I'm very proud of our Minister of Health, who's working very hard despite the fact that he inherited an absolute mess from the NDP, again, who destroyed our province's economy and our financial situation. Despite that, he's still working forward on our health care guarantee, fighting to protect front-line workers in our health care system, fighting to protect our public health care system so that Albertans can enjoy and utilize that system. Again, I appreciate all his hard work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

#### Water Licensing and Cochrane's Water Supply

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cochrane's consumptive water licence can accommodate approximately 40,000 residents. The town's current population is 30,000, and with Cochrane being one of Canada's fastest growing communities, our town could run out its water licence in just seven to eight years. Can the minister of the environment tell this House if the government will consider changes to the water licence transfer process to allow nonconsumptive licences to be changed to consumptive licences when municipalities can demonstrate they will have no impact on withdrawal from the river?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question. We are aware of Cochrane's water needs and continue to work with the town on its development of long-term solutions to that problem and getting a steady supply of safe drinking water to the community. Changing a nonconsumptive licence for a consumptive licence sometimes comes with consequences. It's important that we make sure that we go through that process properly with the community of Cochrane. We'll continue to do that. We will work, of course, with the hon. member as well as with this community to make sure that we can solve the problems for the town of Cochrane.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that there are various ways by which water consumption can be reduced and given that stormwater and treated waste water can be used to support irrigation of recreational green spaces, would the government be willing to consider policy amendments to current legislation to allow municipalities to reuse stormwater for use in irrigation of these green spaces?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for bringing it up, a valuable opportunity to streamline our processes around waste water and stormwater use. Waste water and stormwater are already being used in many communities across the province for irrigation and other purposes. It's a great idea. I appreciate the hon. member raising it in this House. Of course, we're always looking for ways to eliminate red tape and streamline processes to be able to help our communities. We'd love to hear more of his ideas on that important issue. We'll continue to work towards that.

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

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the town of Cochrane has negotiated a potential transfer with a local organization that possesses a nonconsumptive water licence in exchange for the town providing that group with water and sewer services and given that this mutually beneficial deal will give the town access to a much-needed water resource, can the minister inform the Chamber whether his ministry has given consideration to approving such a transfer?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have not seen that particular file across my desk yet. Innovative solutions like that are things that we are interested in. We look forward to hearing more from the hon. member on this issue, and we are happy to work with both him and his community to try to find a way forward on that.

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

#### Minimum Wage for Youth

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a sad day in Alberta history when a government with no idea on how to actually boost youth employment rates desperately reintroduced age-based wage discrimination, a discredited policy that was rightly removed 20 years ago. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what do you plan to tell postsecondary students who find their employment cut in favour of the now cheaper underage workers?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the member opposite asked me to listen to the words of a former MLA for Calgary-Varsity and minister of labour, words that he said over 20 years ago. Instead of listening to what he had to say 20 years ago, I spoke to him yesterday, and I asked him about our current process. He shared with me that this is a very different time and very different circumstances. He is supportive of our policy to get our youth back to work and all Albertans, and that is exactly what the student job-creation wage will do. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the only other province that has this policy has higher than average youth unemployment, proving it a failure, and given that today's new wage policy unfairly targets only those who are both underage and in school and given that the government has now created a strong financial incentive for underage workers to shed their status as students so that they'll be paid more, to the Education minister: do you support this flawed policy, that will obviously increase high school dropout rates?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. We have a youth job crisis in this province. According to Stats Canada in the first quarter of this year, 2019, youth unemployment rate for under 18 was 21.5 per cent. This is three times higher than the average unemployment rate. We need to get our students back to work. They need to get their first job so they get on the job ladder, get the experience and skills they need so that when they actually finish school, they can enter the workforce and have a great career.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have access to *Hansard*, that shows us that the Conservative government of the late '90s found that age-based wage discrimination was a flawed policy, prone to confusion and abuse, and given that I hope the minister asked about employers abusing young workers when he spoke to the former minister, to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: will you fulfill the mandate of your office and immediately take steps to remove this new age-based wage discrimination policy, which was identified as being onerous for employers in the '90s?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, again, I spoke to the minister previously, who is now a constituent of Calgary-Varsity, who indicated that he is supportive of these measures to get our youth back to work. I'd like to point out that this is a student job-creation wage. This is not discrimination. In fact, they have a similar wage structure in Ontario.

I'd like to also point out that the member opposite also helped prove the point that by reducing the wages, we can actually get Albertans back to work. An employer who was supporting her yesterday came forward and said that they actually pay students lower wages until they get employed.

Thank you.

2:20

#### Minister of Finance

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to learn new details about this Minister of Finance and his links to groups that promote discrimination against LGBT Albertans. In a news article last year the minister said that in general he supports parental notification of GSA membership. To the minister, who shouldn't need a guard dog, so the House leader can stay on his leash: does the Minister of Finance support GSAs, support them being called gay-straight alliances, and should all public, Catholic, and private schools be required to allow GSAs?

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted at 2:20.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Toews:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This government and I personally support GSAs in school. I think our Education minister has been clear that this government and this province will have the strongest statutory protections for GSAs across the country. I'm supportive of that, and I appreciate the opportunity to express it.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given that the Minister of Finance's answer is not factual, given that yesterday on social media Devyn Rorem, who grew up in the minister's constituency, reminded Albertans about the Minister of Finance's connections to a school that bans same-sex relationships and compared those relationships to demonic activity, given that Devyn wrote, "How are LGBT+ youth supposed to feel when their MLA is part of institutions that do not welcome them?" will the Minister of Finance confirm for this House that he does not think being gay makes one a demon, and will he answer Devyn Rorem's question?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've made my position clear on GSAs, and I will say this. Constituents in Grande Prairie-Wapiti overwhelmingly elected me to serve them; in fact, by 75 per cent. The opposition continues to distract this government from the reason that Albertans sent us here to form a government, that is to deal with the economy, that is ensure that we're creating jobs and opportunities for all Albertans.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that also yesterday Albertans learned that the Minister of Finance is tied to an organization that promoted an event about helping people deal with, quote, unwanted same-sex attractions and given that this minister won't even answer questions about his links to conversion therapy, to the Minister of Finance, not the House leader: will the Minister of Finance stand in this House and disavow conversion therapy once and for all? It's easy to do.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has disavowed conversion therapy. I absolutely support that position. Again, I think we have an example of the opposition just seeking distraction from their record. Albertans overwhelmingly fired them on April 16 to elect a government with Albertans' priorities. That is this government. We will keep our eye on the ball.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### Affordable Housing in Lethbridge

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lethbridge social housing has nearly 400 senior's units, 300 family units, and 100 affordable housing units but nearly 400 households on the wait-list at any given time. These wait-lists leave our valuable community members out in the dark or keep them relying on the kindness of friends and family for a place to call home. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what are this government's plans to meet the housing needs of these seniors and make sure that these seniors have a reliable home?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to hon. member for the question. Affordable housing is a critical issue for some Albertans, particularly those with low income and some seniors on fixed incomes. Our government will ensure more affordable housing is available for those who need it. We pledged to expand

the use of mixed-income housing to help all Albertans, including seniors, to continue to stay in their home community. We will honour that pledge.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that affordable housing needs to be exactly that and given that an individual living in homelessness costs the system an average of \$114,850 a year, meaning that there could be a more fiscally responsible solution to getting folks without homes into reliable housing situations, to the same minister: how will this ministry affordably and responsibly build housing to meet the needs of Lethbridge seniors requiring safe homes?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuing a private and public partnership option to bring private-sector capital into helping build much-needed public infrastructure will mean that our taxpayer dollars will go much further. This partnership will mean that this government will be able to support the building of more affordable housing for the same monetary investment, giving our community members the chance to lead enjoyable lives.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Given that current affordable housing legislation bogs down our management bodies, delays processing times, perpetuates the wait-list problem for those who need to find homes, surely costing taxpayers additional money through backlogging the system, and fails to serve on an annual basis as many as 2,550 Albertans in Lethbridge, a city of 101,482 inhabitants, to the same minister: how will your department work to help seniors and low-income Albertans secure a dependable and affordable home?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Seniors and Housing in partnership with the associate ministry of red tape reduction has just started reviewing red tape reduction opportunities. Once efficiencies that we are implementing are automatically – then assured income for the severely handicapped clients transition to the Alberta seniors' benefits program. We will continue to have discussions with our department staff and stakeholders to identify and reduce the burden of red tape by . . .

#### School Nutrition Program at Normandeau School

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, 452 students at Normandeau school in Red Deer will go hungry this school year. A number of these kids come from homes that are struggling to make ends meet. While this government moves full steam ahead with their plan to give billions away to wealthy corporations, kids will lose steam without food in their bellies. Premier: why is it more important to fatten the coffers of your wealthy friends and donors while children go hungry?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me how low the Official Opposition will go. What a thing to say about the hon. Premier of this province. It is so ridiculous what the opposition continues to do inside this House. Do you know why that is? It's because last night the opposition stood in this House and one by one voted with Justin Trudeau, voted to not defend this province against his attack on our province with a carbon tax. They're trying to distract Albertans from that. But I can tell you that back home where you and I come from, Olds and Sundre, for example, they haven't forgotten.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the hungry kids will be glad to hear that they're a distraction.

Normandeau school is so worried about losing their school nutrition funding that they are asking businesses to donate a hundred dollars per month . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**Mr. Dang:** . . . or a thousand dollars for a school year to keep the program going.

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**Mr. Dang:** For many of these kids, getting breakfast and lunch at school are the only meals they'll get in a day.

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there is one person in this room who decides what a preamble is, and none of them are on that side of the dais.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South can start his question again.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to hear that those hungry kids will hear that their cause is a distraction.

Given that Normandeau school is so worried about losing their school nutrition funding that they are asking businesses to donate a hundred dollars per month or a thousand dollars for the school year to keep it going and that for many of these kids breakfast and lunch at school are the only meals they'll get in a day, Premier: I know your path to balance is a bit meandering, but is this really the plan, to make up for lost revenues in corporate tax giveaways by soliciting donations from small businesses . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, the question is ludicrous, not because of what it's about; it's the way it's being asked. Again, to imply that the hon. Premier would not care about children in any way is completely inappropriate. [interjections] But here are the facts, Mr. Speaker. The Official Opposition destroyed . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we heard the question very well this time. We will hear the answer very well this time.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The Official Opposition destroyed this province when they were in government, particularly the finances, had us on track for a hundred billion dollars in debt. We will work with our province. We will make sure that we keep the front-line services that Albertans need, but we will also get us on a path to balance because that's what Albertans voted for on April 16, and that's what this government is going to do.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that we know the school is crowdfunding because the minister and Premier refuse to give them clarity and yesterday the Premier complained that the minister just hadn't had enough time since the election to do her job – when we were elected we had even less time and school boards were not forced to make panicked cuts in the absence of the information they needed – given this, there is no excuse. To the Minister of Education: why won't somebody over there make sure the minister's job is done? Hungry kids are waiting.

2:30

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a ludicrous statement. We understand, I understand about feeding children and how important it is. As we saw with enrolment growth, the NDP is using speculation and scare tactics to create undue stress in our education system. Our government has been consistent. We're committed to funding education and supporting our students. We're going to do it. We did it yesterday. We're going to do it tomorrow. We're going to do it next week.

Thank you.

### Film and Television Industry Support

**Ms Goehring:** It was good to see the minister of culture speak about Alberta's screen industry in question period recently. Alberta's movie and television industries are an important part of building and diversifying our economy. The minister said in her response to a question about the industry that she had met with well over 30 stakeholders. To the minister of culture: can you inform the Assembly as to who some of those stakeholders were?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you for the question. We were really, really honoured to be able to attend the Banff media festival. At the festival we had everyone from smaller media groups that work with the Canadian media fund and the Alberta media fund all the way to Netflix, HBO, the Oprah Winfrey group as well as other media groups.

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

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the UCP's platform stated it would remove the screen industry's current system of grants in lieu of a tax credit and given that the minister stated in QP that a tax credit actually gives an incredible ability, forward predictability, and stable funding, again to the minister of culture: will the tax credit be just another grant program under a different name, or will it be a labour-based tax credit, or both?

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Those are actually all things that we're working on right now. It's a really good question. We will be going to a tax credit. It's significantly different from a fund because there's an opportunity to really, really build and diversify the business within the province, everything from screen-based production to postproduction to bricks and mortar. We're really, really excited to get this rolling.

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

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that attracting new screen productions to Alberta provides many economic benefits such as jobs, full hotels and restaurants, and helps to promote tourism, to the minister of culture: will the screen industry be addressed in this fall's budget, and will the cap be raised for the Alberta media fund?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you again for the great question. We're just working towards that right now. As you know, we're just finishing off with some of our interim supply, moving towards what is going to be happening with the panel coming forward. We're extremely excited about working with the industry even more. There's a lot more consultation that still has to be done in order to figure out what

the best system is moving forward. Very excited to be able to share that with you in the near future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Agricultural Exports to China (continued)

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. China is considering halting all pork and beef imports from Canada over unwarranted food safety concerns, concerns that from an Alberta perspective are political rather than health related. Alberta's farmers are already under pressure to maintain secure access to export markets for agrifood products, all while our federal government exacerbates the issue. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry update this House on the status of Albertan agriculture exports?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that very important question as we do share a border and a lot of farmers, and I'm sure you're hearing the same that I am about how important this issue is. As I mentioned earlier, the Alberta government has been notified of a temporary suspension placed on Canadian export certificates for beef and pork. Something that even the Canadian Cattlemen's Association said today is that in the first quarter of 2019 exports to mainland China were \$48 million, and the temporary loss of beef access to the Chinese market is unfortunate and may have financial impacts for both the live animals and processing sectors. So it is something that we take very seriously.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the answer. Given that the ruling Chinese government has halted imports for canola, pork, and now beef as a political tool and given that western Canada is disproportionately affected by market access concerns for agriproducts and given that China is one of the largest importers of our agricultural exports, what is this government doing to ensure that the situation for Alberta farmers doesn't get any worse?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke with Minister Bibeau, the federal agriculture minister, and we're doing everything we can from a provincial standpoint to work with our partners in the federal government to ensure that we do anything that we can to help in this, the investigation that's going on between the Canadian Border Services Agency as well as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the RCMP to try to get to the bottom of the fraudulent export certificates that have been found. We're trying to make sure that we can normalize trade with China but, as well, to ensure that global market access around the world is available to our farmers.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that this block on Canadian meat is the second step taken by Chinese authorities after blocking imports on canola in March and given that my constituents are dramatically affected by concerns with market access, what is the minister doing to ensure that more countries don't follow China's lead and block Canadian exports?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Mr. Speaker, it's working through other countries around the world to make sure that we can expand our market access, whether it's Korea or Japan, other Asian countries, every corner around the world to make sure that we do a good job of selling our high-quality food products that we produce here in

Alberta. About 40 per cent of our canola exports go to China. If we are to find other markets around the world, we have to do a good job of selling the good Canadian story that we have here, that we produce a great, high-quality food that can feed the growing population around the world.

### Skilled Trades Labour Supply

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, as a red seal tradesman and owner of a construction company it's become more and more apparent that over the past 20 years we continue to see an ongoing trend of qualified tradespeople retiring at a rate far greater than what is graduating. It is obvious that if not addressed now, this will continue to hinder our economy and the sustainability of our province. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what steps are you taking to increase enrolment in our trades programs?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. It's something that we do indeed recognize and is a top priority for us. Working towards making sure that we have more people pursuing vocational educational opportunities and entering the skilled trades is a high priority. To help us achieve that, we'll be working with a number of different organizations to help strengthen the great work that they're doing, including organizations like Skills Canada Alberta, Careers: the Next Generation, and Women Building Futures.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is more than apparent that a principal cause of this shortage is a lack of youth interest and engagement in the trades. Given that a main key to solving this problem now and in the future will be to try to find a way to improve youth enrolment in the skilled trades, to the Minister of Advanced Education: what specific steps are you taking to encourage youth involvement in the skilled trades?

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

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you as well to the hon. member for the question. He is indeed correct. Apart from the high unemployment that we're seeing, particularly affecting our youth, we are seeing that translate, of course, into less inclination to pursue skilled trades. We recognize it as a problem, so we have some very specific action that we're going to take to help encourage younger people to pursue vocational educational opportunities, including some additional scholarships for high school students to help them pursue the skilled trades.

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

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you to the minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. After working and mentoring hundreds of apprentices, it has become apparent that technology and equipment are advancing faster than the trades curriculum. It is time that we make sure to prepare our tradespeople to be successful in the workforce. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what is your plan to help modernize our trades program and continue to make sure that our trades education leads Canada and the world?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the hon. member for the question. He's correct with

respect to the advancement of technological change and technological initiatives. I was reading recently a report by the Conference Board of Canada that indicated that over a third of Alberta's workers are in jobs that are susceptible to automation. So we will be proactive in making sure that the skilled trades are changing in a way to meet that growing change in technological innovation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Seniors' Drug Coverage

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government made seniors a priority. We ensured they received the care they needed. We built more than 2,000 new long-term care and dementia beds while increasing funding for home care. In fact, our 2019 platform committed to full drug coverage for all low- and middle-income seniors. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing. You have told this House that seniors will receive all the funding that seniors need and want. Will the UCP commit to providing full drug coverage for seniors, or are seniors living on fixed income not a priority for this government?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question, hon. member. This government cares about seniors so much, and we are working every day to plan for service and programs and to serve seniors. We want to make sure that Alberta seniors live the way they need.

Thank you.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that approximately 10 per cent of seniors with multiple prescriptions spend as much as \$500 a year on copayments and given that this means there are seniors in Alberta who are forced to choose between filling their prescriptions or filling the fridge, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing. Under our plan 4 out of 5 seniors in Alberta would no longer have to make copayments. Will your government commit to improving drug access, or does the UCP government just consider these services as waste?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will work closely with stakeholders to make certain the seniors' concerns are heard and that they have supports to age safely and independently in their own community. This government will also support the societies and organizations that provide service and care to seniors. We will continue to work diligently and tirelessly to provide financial benefits to help seniors with low incomes to meet their basic needs and to make sure that they get care in their homes and affordable personal and health supports.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unacceptable that seniors are still struggling to pay for day-to-day necessities like prescription drugs. Under our plan the average eligible senior would have saved \$200 per year. Again to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how will your government support some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens, or will they suffer from the government's impending cuts to pay for its massive tax giveaway to wealthy corporations?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Pon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government has repeatedly failed our seniors. The NDP has had four years to adjust to the needs of the growing senior population. Our government will ensure that our most cherished residents have the support that they need.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to the tablings.

### Tabling Returns and Reports (continued)

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. First, a CBC article that I referenced in my question to the Minister of Health yesterday, in which CBC spoke with the Health Quality Council CEO, Andrew Neuner, who we have welcomed in the House today, and stated that the council believes “the evidence supporting the need for a superlab in Edmonton still stands.”

I also have an opinion piece from today’s *Edmonton Journal* by Sara Chow, a front-line lab technologist, who states, “The cancellation of the Edmonton Hub Lab . . . will impact patient care” and that “DynaLife does not have the expertise or technology to perform the specialized testing . . . that Albertans need.”

Lastly, I have a letter from Sandra Simard, a front-line medical lab tech – I will table this after.

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

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of a letter on the topic of Bill 9 from a correctional worker, in fact two of them, very concerned about the unconstitutionality of Bill 9 and the safety of their pension.

I also have another five copies of a very lengthy letter from a fellow from Coaldale, Alberta, who’s a corrections worker and who goes into some detail on how he does not support Bill 9’s challenge to his livelihood. Again, a corrections worker, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with the requisite five copies of three letters from three different constituents who were, in their view, to paraphrase quickly, frankly very deplored at the Premier’s behaviour in handing out earplugs in the Chamber, encouraging his members to ignore the opposition.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton Glenora, followed by St. Albert.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter from the Deputy Minister of Alberta Education, Curtis Clarke, directing Alberta educators to be well aware that the government is moving forward on bringing back provincial achievement tests for eight-year-olds with grade 3 provincial achievement tests.

The second is a letter from Karin Brusse-Paterson, president of Battle River local 32, who expresses her deep concern with this. “Imposing standardized testing of 8-year olds is wrong,” she says. She also goes on to infer that when it comes to outing LGBTQ kids, the government trusts their judgment on that, but the government doesn’t trust their judgment on assessment, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a letter from one of my constituents. Her name is Brandi Potter, and she is a licensed practical nurse. She has very serious concerns about Bill 9, Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, or bad-faith bargaining.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my final tabling, a letter from Sandra Simard, a front-line medical lab technologist for 37 years, as posted on the Health Sciences Association website, where she states that “the construction of a super lab is imperative” and that it would “streamline testing to effect cost savings” and that a public-private lab system would be more costly and less efficient than a fully public or private system.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others?

I have a tabling today. I have the requisite six copies of the 2018-2019 annual report from the Health Quality Council.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration, pursuant to the Agrology Profession Act the Alberta Institute of Agrologists’ 73rd annual general meeting report; pursuant to the Architects Act the Alberta Association of Architects 2018 annual report; pursuant to the Workers’ Compensation Act the Workers’ Compensation Board of Alberta 2018 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order, and there was a point of order raised by the hon. Minister of Transportation. I will hear his comments now.

### Point of Order Insulting Language

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m sad to say – and we all witnessed it – that the NDP is sinking to new lows every day, and today was no exception to that case. It was a terrible example of behaviour. The Member for Lethbridge-West essentially called the Government House Leader a dog. Now, I will get to my recitations. I don’t have the Blues, of course, but she said something to the effect that somebody doesn’t “need a guard dog” and to keep the Government House Leader “on his leash.” There is no doubt that she was referring directly to the Government House Leader and calling him a dog. Had it been on the other foot, I would dare say that it would be on the front page of the newspaper if the hon. Government House Leader had called the Member for Lethbridge-West a dog. It would lead the news tonight at 6 o’clock.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, further, it’s disrespectful to the people of Sundre to hear their favourite son referred to as a dog. Under 23(h), (i), and (j) this certainly qualifies as “abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” Under *Beauchesne*’s, sixth edition, page 142, section 484(2): “When members are entitled to the designation, they are referred to in the House as” that designation, not as a dog.

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

I will need no interjections from the Official Opposition. However, I expect that I will call upon you momentarily because I do in fact have the benefit of the Blues. The minister stated: “To the minister, who shouldn’t need a guard dog, so the House leader can



stay on his leash.” Hon. members, we all are very aware of personal attacks, insults, or obscenities that are not in order based upon *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 63. The minister knows what she did. She was aware of what she said. She will stand, apologize, and withdraw.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I do concur in regard to both the standing orders and *Beauchesne’s*. I think it’s entirely appropriate that we on behalf of the Member for Lethbridge-West do withdraw those comments.

**The Speaker:** Correction: I called the member a minister. That is also not the case, but I appreciate the withdrawal.

We are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** I’d like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 2

#### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A2. Are there any comments, questions to be offered with respect to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment to change the name of the act from An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business to a more appropriate name, substituting “Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.”

I think it’s important that we speak to what’s underlying the desire to change the name of the act, and that is that it is fairly apparent that the intention of this bill is not, in fact, to make Alberta open for business. We’ve had the opportunity in this House to speak a number of times about the research that has been done on reduction of corporate taxes and the fact that they, in fact, do not lead to changes in employment and do not allow for greater access for businesses to do good things. Instead, I think the emphasis on this act simply is to suppress the well-being of the labour force and to stop the members of the community from appropriately working on their own behalf.

I’m very concerned about the nature of this bill and feel that it’s appropriate that we stop making it sound like it’s doing something that, in fact, it is not doing. I would like to see any evidence from the government, in fact, that this bill will enhance business in the province of Alberta. We’ve had a great deal of time speaking about the fact that it doesn’t enhance the well-being of people in this province and, instead, is removing the rights of workers to represent themselves and to ensure that they are full participants in the benefits of their own labour.

Given that that is what is happening here and that it is not actually opening up Alberta for business, then I think it’s appropriate that we speak about what it is. It’s a limitation on labour. It’s an attempt to stop labour from engaging in the activities that they need to in order to be appropriately represented. The reality is that labour members in this community only have one thing to offer in their employment setting, and that is their labour; that is, the things that they do. They, then, also need a right to be able to gather collectively to share the power that comes from representation in an

organized union in order to be able to be appropriately represented with an appropriate amount of power.

The issue in any labour relations is the fact that employers have, ultimately, all the power. They can make the decisions about how much you get paid. They can make the decisions about when you’ll be working. They can make the decisions about what kind of safety mechanisms are brought into place. All the union members can do is that they can gather together in order to be able to suggest that should the employer begin to act in an egregious way – and we know that this happens all the time – they need to be able to be protected. That means they need to be able to have a right to form unions. One of the things that this bill does is that it makes it very difficult to form those unions without exposing themselves to intimidation by employers.

Now, I’m very clear, of course, that there are very many employers out there who are excellent employers. I’ve enjoyed really positive relationships with all of my employers, I would say, throughout my career, and I feel quite privileged as a result of that, that I happened to work with industries and business owners who were very nice and very considerate. In those cases, those business owners also were not opposed to the workers bringing forward their concerns and indeed forming unions in the workplace. In fact, some of them quite openly allowed meetings for unionization to occur in their setting because they understood that what the workers are simply asking for is an opportunity to have a voice, to be able to speak on their own behalf.

Any good employer is quite happy to have workers voice their concerns because they know that they will learn a lot about what is best for the employees, and if the employees are well represented and if they’re protected in the work site, they will be happier, and they will stay in the business much longer. I think that we have a long history of having achieved this notion of collective bargaining in western democracies, and it’s very important that we seek to protect and enhance the benefits that come out of this kind of collective action.

It’s not that people are opposed to, you know, businesses doing what it is they wish to do. They just simply wish to be part of it and not be secondary in the considerations that are made for moving forward and for seeking success in a business. The vast majority of employees that I know are quite happy to see their employers be very successful, and they wish their employers to benefit from the successes that they achieve by the creation of industry and will do things often quite extraordinary to ensure that that happens.

3:00

I mean, many business leaders that I know will tell you about how important it is that particular individuals have done the work that they’ve done, you know, the person at the front desk, the secretary that helps to keep you organized and helps to keep you focused and makes sure that you respond to correspondence in an appropriate and timely way to concerns coming from the community. Sometimes it absolutely saved businesses from great devastation, and employers are very seriously sad to see it when they leave. And we know that workers that are protected by collective bargaining tend to be more satisfied and tend to move around less in their communities and to stay in the business more.

It’s a pretty straightforward request here, that we look at what is actually happening here in this bill, that we actually take some time to not pretend that this is about creating businesses but it’s really, in this bill, an attempt to change labour legislation. You know, we could have suggested something ridiculous and ironic for the title of this bill, but we’re trying to co-operate with the government side of the House, trying to help them to be more clear in their deliberations, so we are suggesting, rather, to remove the title, which

is An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, and instead replace it with a reasonable title to reflect what actually happens in the bill itself, which is Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act because that's exactly what's happening in this bill. They're intending to amend the labour relations in this province.

Now, we, of course, thought that amending the labour relations in this province was important because, in fact, many labour relations had not even been examined for over 30 years in this province. For over 30 years it was neglected by the previous PC governments, and we felt it was time to bring this forward, so we did. But all of our changes were focused on ensuring that labour relations were good in this province, that we didn't have threats of strikes, that we didn't have concerns with the employees in this province either in terms of their dissatisfaction with their work settings or, you know, issues around safety. Many of our changes were around safety in the workplace and so on. You'll see that we actually engaged in significantly more labour relations changes in the last four years than had been done in many, many more years previous to that. As I say, sometimes statutes were on the books for over 30 years without any kind of a second look, so it was important, then, that we bring this forward.

I'm very discouraged that one of the very first things that happened when this new government got elected is that they came in to undo work that had been long requested and long overdue in this province simply because they have an ideological bent that they can't seem to exercise. They come in and from their rigid 1950s ideology step in to try to suppress the ability of workers to take care of themselves and to have a voice at the table.

Now, I know that, you know, not hearing the voices of other people is a pretty consistent aspect of this particular government, having handed out earplugs to specifically not hear the voices and, of course, using committees, for example, to suppress bills that they don't like so that they don't even have to see those bills in the first place. Now here we are having bills that, really, go against the ability of workers to participate in their own well-being.

I would suggest that it's very important that we be honest in our deliberations here today and that we are clear with people that what's happening in this bill is not in fact making Alberta open for business. It's always been open for business. Businesses have done very well. Unfortunately, we went through very difficult economic times in the last four years, and I know that the government likes to blame that on our government all the time. But you notice that they don't stand up and say: oh, yeah, and the conservative government in Saskatchewan was also bad, too.

If you look at the statistics, you'll see that the things that they throw at our face, the loss of jobs, for example, which we agree on, and the reduction of our standing with credit agencies – we understand those are problems, but they are not reflective of the government of the day. Those exact same things happened to the conservative government right next door. Clearly, they are misusing statistics to be able to create a narrative which is in fact not supported by the statistics if they look at them more broadly. Look at them not simply as to how it is that things got difficult in the province of Alberta but also as that they were equally difficult in other places that had the same issue as we did; that is, a dependence on oil and gas as a major source of income in the province.

We know that they like to create a narrative, and they do that mostly by keeping the blinders on and not being willing to look at the broad truth, as is expressed by numbers and the statistics that are widely available. Simply choosing to look at one downturn without looking at the other dozens of downturns that have occurred in the country of Canada tells us that they're not really interested in

the downturn at all. That is just simply a narrative that they used effectively to get themselves returned to government.

I know that the denial of research is something that's sort of endemic in this government. You know, we've demonstrated in the past that cutting corporate taxes doesn't increase jobs, that taking the rights away from workers is not going to increase jobs. For example, in the case of GSAs, the elimination of GSAs are likely to increase the number of adolescent suicides both, by the way, the research indicates, for gay students but also for nongay students in schools that have GSAs.

The point of all that is that the evidence is there. The statistics are there. You have to read statistics with an underlying understanding of what it is that you're trying to ask when you create the statistic and that helps you to make decisions about the outcome, not simply to cherry-pick small slivers of statistics in order to be able to make a narrative that isn't true if you look at the broad breadth of the statistics such as in this case, where we're able to say that Alberta did not suffer the slings and arrows of misfortune that have been visited upon us somehow differentially than other places in the country such as the province of Saskatchewan, which, in fact, has a conservative government and which actually used different mechanisms to respond to that. They were doing cutbacks in Saskatchewan, shutting down libraries, closing school programs, and other things like that at the same time that we were actually creating jobs by building bridges, building hospitals, and building the cancer centre in Calgary.

The government side of the House likes to say that jobs were lost under our tenure. We understand that many jobs were lost. But, actually, if you read the statistics properly and look at it not simply as to how many jobs have been lost in the time since the day we got elected till now but, rather, when the job loss began to occur, you see that it actually began to occur in November of 2014, while the Conservatives were in office. In fact, the vast majority of the significant downturn, more than 50 per cent of the job loss, occurred before the election actually occurred. Yes, it did continue after the election. Of course, much of that continued in the month or two before we had a chance to even begin governance in this province. So the vast majority of job loss in this province is on the Conservatives' failure to prepare for a downturn in the oil and gas economy.

You know, it's a bit of a ruse for them to say that somehow our policies had created job loss in this province. In fact, if you look at the last two years, the number of actual people employed in the province of Alberta increased, did not decrease, and to say otherwise would be to mislead this House, this Chamber. Our policies, as they came into effect, indeed did increase the number of jobs in the province of Alberta. As a result, every time they stand up with this narrative that somehow we were in office while people lost jobs, I'd suggest that this is a falsehood that they know very well is a falsehood, but because it creates a narrative, they're prepared to use it.

**3:10**

I think the title of this particular bill is part of that narrative, is part of this notion that somehow Alberta was not open for business. But, indeed, Alberta was open for business, always was. We experienced a downturn, and unfortunately our government paid the price, as governments often do when there is an economic downturn, even though the policies of the government itself are not particularly related to the downturn or did not cause the downturn. In fact, a careful reading of the statistics, which I'm very happy to walk through in detail if the government wishes me to do – I'm more than happy to bring in and walk through month by month when the job losses occurred. I can demonstrate to them that, in

fact, under our government more people were employed in the province of Alberta than at any other time in the history of the province of Alberta.

However, subsequent to the election of this government the number of job losses has gone up. Here we have a situation where they come in and say that they're going to focus on jobs and increase jobs but, in fact, they are also suffering the slings and arrows of misfortune from across the broader economy. But should I stand here today and accuse this government of removing jobs from this province? I can do that. That's what they have done to us. That's what they have said repeatedly. Should I stand here and say that this government has lost 26,000 jobs since they came in? Has this Labour minister actually failed already? Should this Labour minister be replaced because they have lost that number of jobs? That's what they're saying about our time in. But I can actually say that during our time the number of people employed was higher than ever before. This Labour minister can't say that.

I think, then, that means that we should stop trying to mislead the public, stop trying to use bills to create a narrative which does not adequately and properly reflect the statistics that are available to us. If they choose to do that, then it tells me that they know something and they are trying to hide something and they are trying to mislead the public in the province of Alberta. That's not something that I wish to participate in. I have no desire to mislead the citizens of the province of Alberta, in spite of the fact that this government would like to drag us along on this ruse. So I would suggest that it is time that we stand up and say the truth about this bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise today to offer more comment on the amendment before us and I'd like to commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for his thoughtful analysis that he just offered to the Legislature on why he thought that the amendment, renaming the bill which is initially called An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business is an appropriate amendment, because the naming of the bill as An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business is one that actually deflects from what the content of the bill actually accomplishes.

What it does, Madam Chair, is something that actually changes labour relations statutes and amends labour relations law and employment standards in the province of Alberta. As such, it should be appropriately named in a way that reflects what it actually does. The amendment does that by substituting an alternate name, that being "Employment Standards and Labour Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 2019." It's an appropriate effort to properly describe this piece of legislation as an act that makes some very significant changes to employment standards and labour relations statutes in the province of Alberta.

I think we've made a very large effort and we continue to do so to explain to all those in the province who have an interest in protecting workers' rights in Alberta that this piece of legislation is an attack on working people. It's an attack on young workers in particular. It's an attack in many cases on young females in the workplace who are liquor servers. It's an attack on those who are in the oil patch, who are amongst workers who commonly work overtime and may seek to bank that wage.

It's not anything that would resemble something that would make for an atmosphere where you'd claim that we have a healthy business environment as a result. Anything that creates disharmony in your labour market and creates a distrust or a mistrust between working people and the employers that employ them is not

something that creates an atmosphere that is healthy for business to operate in a way that is attractive for people to want to invest in it. You have to have contentment, let's say, on both sides of the table, where employers and employees reach fairly negotiated settlements. The underlying values that allow that to happen are embedded in labour legislation.

What we see, I think, by the government in naming the act as they initially have, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, is maybe an attempt to tell the world that this piece of legislation is actually slanted to favour the business community as opposed to having balanced labour relations in the province that respects both parties to labour negotiations. The claim that it makes Alberta open for business maybe is an unveiled advertisement that the favourite son of this government is the business community, and they would rather see labour legislation tilted in favour of the business community and against working people. The measures that are included in this Bill 2 certainly almost without exception take money away from individuals and give it corporations.

That shows the underlying values of this government. They really see people as being servants of an economy rather than seeing it as incumbent upon them as a government to help design an economy that serves people. That, I think, is the crux of the matter, that individual working people are not valued. They're seen as input costs to serve an economy, and the benefits of their labour should flow up towards business. Trickle-down economics has been discredited time and time again, yet this government seems to cling to it in the hopes that somehow this time it'll be different, that the laissez-faire Adam Smith ideology and philosophy will somehow change overnight and money will flow to working people and it will be equitable. It doesn't happen that way. I mean, there has to be legislation in place to protect those who are less powerful in the labour relations negotiation process. You have to have fair processes.

This really goes ahead and tilts the balance against working people. For example, when you look at the reduction in minimum wage, I mean, the argument made by the government to do that, that in fact that \$2 reduction in minimum wage for youth workers is going to incent business owners to create more employment, that they're going to take that \$2 an hour or roughly \$3,500 to \$4,000 a year per employee who's subjected to this wage rollback and they're automatically going to invest it in new jobs, simply hasn't borne fruit. It doesn't have a historical record in fact, but that's the argument that the government relies upon. What happens, in fact, is that the individual business owners will simply pad their profits. They don't necessarily go out and hire new people as a result of those savings.

3:20

I really try to put myself in the position of, say, a young student who's in grade 10 to 12 right now. We've seen lots of graduation ceremonies happen. In fact, I'm going to address the graduating class in Jasper Place high school later on this afternoon. Those students are people that I'm going to be facing and talking with about this piece of legislation, and I'm just imagining what they're thinking right now, where they maybe have been planning to go to work at a summer job and they're looking at what they might earn over the course of their summer earnings and they're calculating it based on the minimum wage that we've managed to raise up to \$15 an hour in incremental steps. Now, with this new government in place, they've had to step back and say: "Whoa. I thought I was making \$15 an hour, but I guess not. I'm down to \$13 an hour."

I'm sure they're scratching their heads and wondering how the government thinks that this is going to help them, when the government makes the case to this House and to Albertans to say:

"Look. Reducing your wage, young man or young lady who's going to be in the workforce earning \$13 an hour now rather than the \$15 you were expecting, is going to be a good thing for the province of Alberta and the Alberta economy, so thank you very much for that significant contribution. You've given up a significant part of your earnings because we've legislated that your wages are going to get dropped. But don't worry. It's going to be good for the province as a whole, and we appreciate your sacrifice. It's something that we think we can do to better the province, and – guess what? – we're doing it to you because we think we can get away with it. We think that you have less value to us than other people, and you're not voting right now."

Guess what, Madam Chair? These young people are being mobilized and motivated, and I certainly expect to hear an earful when I go to a graduation ceremony later today about this government's policy of reducing minimum wage for young workers under 18 years of age. I think it's disgraceful. A jurisdiction that has a minimum wage that is below a living wage is one that is making a statement to its population that they don't value those who have the least amount of political power to protect themselves from a government who will side with the employers, who create false arguments saying that those dollars saved will be reinvested to create greater employment.

It's not an argument that any of those students that I'll be meeting tonight, I expect, will be quoting to me. They're going to be wondering why they were hurt on purpose by this government. I'm fully expecting to hear many of them ask how they can step in to oppose such measures, what can be done to ensure that this government gets a message from them that they are very, very unhappy. They're perplexed, they feel undervalued, and they are motivated to do something to oppose this type of legislation now and in the future from this Conservative government.

The other measures involved in this piece of legislation that the motion before us purports to amend by way of changing the title are other examples of basically picking the pockets of people who are wage earners in the province. It's shameful that this government sees that working people are a target that they should attack. It's a continuation of a theme that this government has lapsed into right from day one, where they're looking to divide Albertans against each other, pit working people against employers, saying that, you know, working people don't deserve a living wage. It's causing economic downturn when in fact people who earn living wages, people who are earning at the lower end of the spectrum actually create opportunity when they spend those dollars.

The consumer economy is 70 to 75 per cent of the economic activity in any of the western democracies, and it's pretty clear to see from that statistic alone that if an individual or government wants to stimulate spending and create employment, the thing to do is to put money in the pockets of those who are most likely to spend it, that being the lower income spectrum of your population. That's what we tried to do with a number of measures when we were government, Madam Chair: to ensure that individual families who were on the lowest end of the wage spectrum or lower income spectrum had monies to live respectably and in dignity and, in turn, stimulate the economy as well.

Families earning the subsidies that the government gave to low-income people received a generous increase, which was well deserved. That was much appreciated by many, many families through the Alberta child tax credit increases that we instituted, and it improved their lives tremendously, the living standards, the quality of life for so many families throughout this province. It cut the poverty rate in half; 44,000 people were brought out of poverty as a result. That's something that you herald as a government and can be proud of.

Yet this government seems to be proud of doing the opposite and taking money out of working families' pockets and saying that it's something that is a respectable thing to do. It's part of their value structure to do this in an effort to somehow create an economy that businesses can thrive in. It just doesn't hold water with me or with those young students that I'm going to meet tonight when they are told that cutting their wages is going to be good for them.

Other things that they wish to do are equally disturbing. The people who earn overtime, as I mentioned before, who are quite often in the oil patch, will only get to bank it at straight time if indeed they come to a so-called agreement with their employer. What it basically does is open up an option where the employer is in a greater strength of power vis-à-vis the employee. The net result is that the employee who had wages at time and a half coming to them will end up entering into agreements coercively, not voluntarily. There's coercion involved to take a significant reduction in what they're ultimately owed. Their take-home pay, their balance sheet are going to be hit hard by these measures.

As I mentioned, if you're an oil and gas worker making an average pay, putting in 10 hours of overtime every week on a 12-week project, that's 120 hours in paid time off. Now the difference between banking that pay at time and a half pay versus straight time is over \$2,500, and the government is saying: "It's good for you. Don't worry. In the long term it's good for you. It's a job-creation measure. We'll see the numbers in employment go up, and thank you very much for that donation of 2,500 bucks. That'll go and join that of your son or daughter, who just donated 4,000 bucks as a university student or a student working a summer job. So your family – congratulations – just donated 6,500 bucks to the Alberta treasury."

Now, that's a huge amount of money, 6,500 bucks. How many kids in that family? Maybe it's even more. Maybe it's a family with a couple of kids, and you can add another \$4,000 onto that. That's 10,000 bucks that that family has just donated to the Alberta treasury, and this government is cheering that on.

3:30

When I talk to students later on this evening about these measures and ask them: "How are you affected, Alyssa or Michael, in your take-home pay? What does it mean to your family that this government is saying that we're going to stimulate economic activity and you're going to pay for it? But it's good for you; don't worry" – look those students in the eye, slap them on the back, congratulate them and say: "Job well done; 12 years of school, you've done a fine job. You're the future of this province. We greatly value your contribution and what you're going to do in the world, and, by goodness, we're going to show that appreciation by cutting your wages by 2 bucks an hour. Hallelujah."

That's a pretty hypocritical statement, and it's an exposure of the values that really underlie the principles that this government is following in terms of the application of economic policy, where it looks to stimulate the economy to create employment to counter an economic downturn that was caused by a systemic drop in the price of oil, which really knocked the socks off the revenue stream that this provincial government had. Yet the answer to this dilemma for this government is to look towards its lowest paid citizens and say, "Look; we're taking it out of your pocket" and also to those who are in many cases hit hardest if they're working right now at all as a result of the downturn, and to the individuals who are receiving overtime in the oil and gas sector, taking about 2,500 bucks out of their pocket over the course of a week where they work 10 hours every week on a 12-week project.

It's a huge difference for working people, Madam Chair, and we don't think that this government has the interests of working people

at heart at all when they can proceed gleefully with the type of legislation that Bill 2 is. We believe it should really be named appropriately as a major shift in employment standards and labour relations and call it the employment standards and . . . [Mr. Dach's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to this amendment to Bill 2, which proposes to change the title. Now, I'm a student of communications. I've long had an interest in advertising, marketing, how we use words to communicate ideas. English was my favourite subject in high school. I was one of those strange kids that actually enjoyed writing essays, and that's something that has continued on in my life. I put my creative energies for a time into music and took the opportunity to do some songwriting and some other things there, but when I decided to go back to school and earn a second degree, I ended up doing a bachelor of arts in professional communication. I was fascinated with learning the history of communications but, in particular, how we use words, images, different things to convince people of ideas. Indeed, I was particularly fascinated by political communications. That's when it first came into my head that maybe someday I might like to run for office. Happened a little sooner than I anticipated; that's how, in part, I find myself here today.

That's what we are looking at here with this particular bill. I understand the reasons why the government wishes to call this An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. That is a large part of what this government ran on and what it claimed it was going to focus on doing. Now, one can certainly question a number of the actions that this government has made since coming into office and whether or not they have maintained that supposed laserlike focus, which they stated they would. That aside, I can understand why they brought forward this bill title. However, as someone who strongly believes in truth in advertising, I have to say that I think this is a very good amendment because, as my colleagues have outlined and as others have said, I do not believe that this is a bill that truly makes Alberta open for business or that, indeed, that is the message that this bill actually sends in the things that it's choosing to do and what it hopes to accomplish.

We've had a lot of discussion in this House about the various different aspects in this bill. Indeed, I suppose it's par for the course that in many ways so far this government has proven to not be quite what it advertised itself to be. We've certainly seen that in, you know, their claims that they would be coming in to protect public health care but immediately using their private committee that they forced onto the Assembly to kill a private member's bill on that very particular topic with barely any discussion. This is a government that claimed it would not legislate on social issues. It immediately brought forward Bill 8 and the changes that are being done there, cancelled the conversion therapy working group, taking other steps which show that clearly they are not as advertised.

This bill, while it does, I guess, fulfill some of their campaign promises – in this case they actually deigned to tell Albertans what they were going to do, unlike their recent Bill 9, which they did not mention in their campaign platform, in which they hid from Albertans their intent to mount that attack on Alberta's public-sector workers and to break their contracts, to set that troubling precedent right out of the gate. Unlike that bill, they did campaign on these particular things, so I can't say that the bill is not doing what they said they would do. It certainly is. I have to give them

credit for that. However, I would dispute their claim that these are decisions that communicate that we are open for business or that Alberta is a great place to do business.

First of all, Madam Chair, I've talked at great length and, I'm sure to the pleasure of all members, I'm going to talk at some length again about changes to overtime provisions. What message does that send to folks across Canada, to workers who may want to come here to bolster our labour force, to folks who are looking to come here to start a business, that we would be the only province in Canada who values workers' time for less, that we feel the only way that a business can succeed in Alberta is to rob every single worker who works an hour of overtime and banks that overtime of a half-hour of their time? The only jurisdiction. I am proud to have Alberta be exceptional on many fronts. This is not one, I think, that casts us in a good light.

To me, that does not say that Alberta is open for business. That says to me that this particular government at least in Alberta is open to lobbyists. They are open to businesses that want to cut back on what they pay to their employees. They want to take away, want to pick the pockets of Albertans for the time that they have duly worked for and earned. For that reason I think it's far better to go with a nice clinical title for the bill, which states roughly what it is but doesn't aspire to claims for what the bill does not in fact do. In fact, in some ways it says precisely the opposite of the message that it claims, and that is one of the troubling aspects of this bill, Madam Chair. It's what it conveys about this government's mentality about businesses and employees and workers.

I've talked before about how we've had that problem in this province for many, many years, how previous Conservative governments chose not to act while the rest of Canada progressed on many fronts in terms of labour legislation, recognizing protections and rights for workers and improving conditions and other opportunities. Alberta remained a laggard because Conservative governments in Alberta seemed to feel that the balance needed to stay permanently tipped towards the side of business.

3:40

That in no way, Madam Chair, is casting any disparagement on employers in Alberta, but there have certainly been very particular employers or particular businesses who were great contributors to previous Conservative governments before we removed during our government's term the influence of corporate donations to political parties. In the past Conservative governments were great friends with particular businesses, who would contribute large sums of money, and for that reason they chose to keep the labour laws in Alberta tilted in that direction. I suppose there weren't enough workers that they felt were making contributions.

So we find ourselves here today where, of course, during the last election the particular party that has now formed government was not able to directly solicit corporate donations, but we certainly did see that there were a number that decided to form political action committees or to contribute to the same, looking forward to extracting favours from this party should they take government. In fact, that is what has happened, and that is, in fact, what we see happening now. So this is the first of what I'm sure will be many favours this government will look to do for particular businesses, again tilting that scale, choosing to take away some of the balance that's been enabled for workers in the province of Alberta, again the same balance that exists in every other jurisdiction in Canada.

On overtime in particular, Madam Chair, this government feels the need to take that away from Alberta workers, to tell them they are worth less because that provides an advantage for this government. That is not a statement of being open for business, at least not open for the kind of business they want to suggest. It

certainly notes the kind of business that they were open for during the election campaign.

So we find ourselves here today with this bill, and that is one of the reasons why I support this amendment. It's a lot more honest, or at least it's neutral. You know, if we wanted to give this a truly honest title – well, perhaps I won't go there. I might strain the language that would not be parliamentary. We have here instead the opportunity to apply a strictly neutral and technical title to this bill, which is seeking to pick the pockets of Albertans.

I spoke about the changes in overtime, Madam Chair, for which this government has provided no justification. I have certainly had no flurry of workers coming to my door demanding that they be allowed to take half an hour less of their overtime.

Then we have, of course, what is now being put in place with the youth wage differential. Madam Chair, I'm not sure how it says that we are open for business when the changes that are happening are simply saying that we are willing to make changes that, again, are frankly inconsistent with most of the rest of Canada. We recognize, of course, that in Ontario this policy has been in place, and I think my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods has been very good in outlining just how unsuccessful that policy has been there, the additional red tape it's created, the fact that they still have a high youth unemployment rate, the fact that there is abuse and discrimination that occurs.

That is what this government wants to introduce into Alberta. They want to create red tape. They want to invite abuse. They want to encourage youth to drop out of school. Those things, to me, Madam Chair, are not suggestions that we are open for business, at least not the kind of business that they want to say that we are open for. It suggests that this government was certainly open to lobbyists during the election campaign and in the production of their policy platform and indeed now in the legislation that they are bringing forward in this House. But that is not the kind of business that is going to benefit Albertans, Madam Chair. It may benefit this particular government and that particular party, but that is not the kind of business that is going to benefit our communities.

We have here this amendment, which is a reasonable amendment, to simply add a neutral title to the bill as opposed to one that would more reflect, well, what I'm starting to think more and more of this bill, that this is an act to declare Alberta open for lobbyists. Certainly, we saw that there was an intense campaign from Restaurants Canada advocating for precisely these kinds of changes because they feel that their restaurants could not maintain their bottom line paying youth the same wage as they pay other employees.

As I've stated previously, Madam Chair, I know many business owners in downtown Edmonton who have opened successful restaurants and cafés and other service businesses who are not asking for this, who are not saying that they need this to succeed. These are forward-thinking, progressive business owners. I would also note that the majority of them are not franchises. It's good to see that locally owned and locally created businesses have the ability to thrive in the environment and pay their employees a fair wage. That's not to say that all franchises are in the same boat. Indeed, I know that there are some franchise owners who place the priorities of their employees a bit higher and want to maintain fairness in their wages and in the hiring practice. But I think, to a certain extent, there are very particular business models that are pushing for this.

Frankly, Madam Chair, I would rather see businesses thrive that treat their employees well than attempts to cut the bottom line at every opportunity, even if that means lobbying government to make these kinds of changes, changes like our government made: cutting the small-business tax from 3 per cent to 2 per cent. That is something that helps business. That was something that was not

borne on the backs of workers. That was not something where we felt we had to tilt the scale.

I've spoken often on a number of bills from this government about that question of balance. This government seems to have a very skewed view of where the point of balance in this province should lie and indeed who holds the majority of power and who holds positions of privilege in this province. Certainly, there were some that were mightily offended that anyone other than a Conservative government would ever have been in place in the province of Alberta and spent much of the last four years bemoaning that fact. They feel that now that that is no longer the case, rightful balance has been restored and we can go back to the way everything was.

Well, Madam Chair, there are some things on which I think a lot of Albertans are going to disagree in regard to that. On this particular issue, when it comes to things like reducing the youth wage, taking away the same rights that people have in every other part of Canada, where when they work an hour of overtime, they are paid or they bank an hour and a half of time, that is not about balance.

I recognize, Madam Chair, that the relationship between employer and employee is a symbiotic one. You know, the two need to work together. Generally you are not going to have a business able to grow without employees. Likewise, no one is going to be able to be an employee unless there are employers. That is reasonable.

But the question of what kind of balance there needs to be between the two – the suggestion that this bill makes, that in order to be open for business, we have to reduce the rights of employees, that they should be grateful that they have a job, these kinds of changes that, again, are without justification, without any proof of being valid in any other jurisdiction in this country: that, to me, is suggesting an unfortunate view on the part of this government that employees are more of a problem, that employees must be willing to accept less for the privilege of having a job in the province of Alberta. If that is open for business, that is not any kind of business that I am interested in.

3:50

I think we can strike a fair balance in this province. I think we can declare that this province is open for business, that our employers in the province of Alberta, the people that start and operate businesses, are able to compete on the same terms as employers and business owners in every other province in Canada. We offer them many advantages, Madam Chair. Alberta remains the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada, period. Our businesses do not pay a sales tax. They do not, like some do in other parts of Canada, have to pay any health premiums on behalf of their employees.

Now, that is not to say, Madam Chair, that I think it's easy. I recognize the challenge of operating a business. I myself in the past, in my work as a musician, had to hire employees at times. It was on a contract basis. Yeah, I had to think about: how can I make this work? How can I pay my guys fairly for doing a gig? Indeed, I was the one that went out and hustled and found a particular gig and put things together, and I wrote up the charts. I put everything together, and then we sat down and rehearsed, but I recognized that that was my job. That was my ambition. That was what I wanted to do. It was not my right to put that on the backs of the guys that I hired to help me accomplish that.

Again, it's a symbiotic relationship. We need to find ways to work together. It wouldn't have worked for me if venues were paying too little – and indeed there were those that did – or, you know, if there were costs being imposed on it that were too much

for me to be able to make that work. Ultimately, these are decisions that I make when I choose to strike out on my own.

I think that there are definitely ways that government can act to try to better support businesses. I have the opportunity to speak with many business owners in my constituency of many different, various industries that they work in, and I recognize this government's intent . . .

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to speak to this amendment. I've had the opportunity over last night and for some of the debate this morning to hear some of the arguments put forward by the hon. members for Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton-Rutherford, and Edmonton-City Centre, and I'd like to actually take this opportunity to respond to them.

As I understand it, the argument being put forward by the hon. members across the aisle is that we need to change the name of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, largely because they believe that, in their view, this bill and the youth job-creation minimum wage, which is actually not part of this bill but we've implemented at the same time, will actually not create jobs, and some would even suggest that this is actually an attack on workers. Madam Chair, I have to say that this clearly demonstrates that the members across – we have a significant difference in world view, but quite frankly they don't get it. They do not understand how to support our job creators. They do not understand the implications of the policies that they put in place during one of the worst economic downturns in our history in Alberta and what impact that had on job creators.

Madam Chair, I was listening to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who said: "Please let me show you the research. Listen to the research. We actually created jobs. Our government did a good job, and our policies had no negative impact." I disagree, and I strongly disagree, because research, quite frankly, shows the opposite.

I just want to talk about not everything that was said across. That would take me far too long, and my time is limited here. But I do want to speak to a couple of items particularly, even though it's not part of the bill. I'll speak to it because it was spoken to by a large number of the members across, the youth minimum wage. I'll speak to the general holiday changes and also speak to banked overtime.

Before I get to that, I want to talk about some of the research that actually was done. First, you know, I'd like to talk about a study done by the Conference Board of Canada. Actually, it was done while the members opposite were in government and were increasing the minimum wage by nearly 50 per cent in the face of one of the worst economic downturns in the province. What the Conference Board of Canada said – and this was done midway through the changes – was that these changes will have a negative impact on jobs. What they said, Madam Chair, is that context matters, that we were in the face of one of the greatest downturns in our history, and that this means there will be a negative impact on jobs. Did the members opposite listen to that research? No. They moved ahead and continued to increase the minimum wage, right?

The studies showed at that point in time that roughly a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage would result in a 1 to 3 per cent decrease in jobs. Did they do 10 per cent? No. Did they do 20 per cent? No. They did nearly a 50 per cent increase in the minimum wage. Granted, that's a study. That's research. So let's take a step back and explore a little bit: what were the implications of these changes?

Studies were done by the CFIB, and they asked 1,000 Alberta businesses, you know, on the increase in minimum wage: what was the implication? Over 50 per cent said: we actually laid off staff or we reduced hours because of that. Same with the Calgary Chamber of commerce, right? They did a study. What were the actual implications of the increase to the minimum wage? Again, over half laid off staff, reduced hours.

So to hear the members opposite say, "No, no; we created jobs, and our policies didn't have a negative impact," Madam Chair, I submit to you, is totally incorrect. Their changes in policies, the minimum wage and – sorry. One other comment. I know that one of the members opposite was talking about Restaurants Canada. They did research as well: tens of thousands of jobs lost. And what we heard from them is that not only the minimum wage but the change in the general holiday rules resulted in, again, employees laid off and reduction of hours. This is the research that's shown. This is what actual employers have said in Alberta, and this is why we need to make the change to get Albertans working again.

The implications of this? We spoke to it earlier today, and I've mentioned this stat before. Our youth, the youngest and the least experienced, are those most hard hit. Those are the people who have been most severely impacted by these changes – right? – the policy changes made by the previous government: 21.5 per cent in the first quarter of this year, 1 in 5 students and young people under the age of 18, are unemployed. This doesn't even count the number of people who actually left the workforce, Madam Chair. They left the workforce because they couldn't find a job, so they can't earn money for school. They can't earn money to buy a car. They can't earn money to help and support their families because they don't have a job.

We need to make a change, and this is what the research showed. We actually made this change, again, outside of Bill 2, the youth job-creation minimum wage. We also are making changes to part of Bill 2 to return to the old rules in terms of the general holiday rules so that we can help our youth in particular get their first job, get on the job ladder, and move forward.

I'd like to point out, Madam Chair, that this is just a minimum. A minimum is just that, a minimum. It's not a maximum. Some employers choose to actually pay more than that, which is fantastic – right? – because they hire someone at a lower wage, they get experience, they actually get wage increases, and they move them up the job ladder, and they get the experience. They build their skill set, and this sets them up for life, and by getting on the job ladder, they can actually get wages. This is how business works, and clearly it appears that the members opposite just don't understand this, and they just don't get that.

4:00

I'd like to turn my comments now to talk about banked overtime. You know, we've said on this side of the House that the changes to banked overtime, first of all, are not about pay. If an individual wants to get paid time and a half, which is the minimum according to employment standards, they may do so. Other employers pay more. Collective agreements pay more. That doesn't impact that at all. If they want to get paid time and a half, they can be paid time and a half. This refers to banked overtime. So when the members opposite say that they are going to lose pay because of that, that is simply misleading. It is incorrect. They're not going to lose pay because of this.

Now, what this is about is about providing the opportunity and the flexibility for employees and employers to reach agreements to their mutual benefit. You know, we've said before that we've heard from employers and employees in developing this as part of Bill 2, our open for business act, which was in our platform, Madam Chair.

We ran on this, and Albertans expect us to deliver on this. This is in our platform. What we heard from both employers and employees is that because of the policy change by the previous government, there was a loss of opportunity.

I want to read to you a very short letter that was sent to the government because this encapsulates what employers and employees are saying. This is from a small-business cabinetmaker, and it was sent to the Premier. I quote:

Dear Premier,

Thank you very much for repealing the NDP's disastrous labour laws. The banked overtime at time and a half rule greatly hurt our company and our employees. In our business, labour accounts for 65% of the price of the product. Overtime is just not possible because no customer will pay 30% more for their cabinets in such a competitive market. That rule forced us to turn away business during busy times and cut our employees' hours during slow times. What a disaster for Alberta business and Alberta families. Now we can go back to "making hay when the sun shines" and get on with business.

It goes on to say:

Today your policy created new jobs. You gave me faith to hire. A few minutes ago, I advertised four new jobs on the Canada job site. It is because of you. It's just four jobs for now but I am sure that those four people will be very grateful just as I am.

Madam Chair, this bill is about us being open for business. It's about this cabinetmaker, who has faith and the ability not only to provide flexibility with other employees and hire new employees and actually go after more businesses, something that's good for the employee and the employer, but it's about the restaurant owner, retail owners to be able to say: I can now actually hire people at a lower wage and get them on the job ladder.

Again, last week I had a restaurant owner come in, who actually came from out of Canada, an immigrant. He came to Canada about four years ago, a small-business person. He invested – it was a franchise in this case – in three franchises. He indicated to me that with the policy changes made by the previous government, he no longer could actually hire anyone without experience and had no one working for him under 18 in three of his restaurants. He indicated to me that now with the change – and one other thing. I'll just back up. Because of that, he actually laid off people, and it was the younger people. But now with the change he can actually hire younger people to work in their first job as hosts and hostesses or in the kitchen, washing, just getting experience, and then moving them up the ladder – right? – because of this change.

Getting back to the change and the name being suggested by the members opposite, I simply, from my perspective, cannot agree. This bill is about creating opportunities for Albertans, this bill is about getting our young people in particular but all Albertans working, and this bill is about signalling to the community that Alberta is open for business. We need to drive investment here, create jobs. Madam Chair, that is what we ran on, that is what we promised in our platform commitment, and that is what I'm focused on delivering.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to this amendment, which is essentially asking to name this bill exactly what it does. It changes employment standards, it changes provisions in employment standards and labour relations, and it actually picks the pockets of working Albertans.

I do understand that the UCP ran a campaign on creating jobs, the economy, and pipelines, but they have not done a single thing

to create jobs ever since they became the government. Instead, under their watch we have lost more jobs. I'm talking about Calgary. When we were in government, we were told that taxes were somehow killing jobs; the carbon levy was killing jobs. What they did: they got rid of the carbon levy; they gave the biggest tax break in the history of this province to the richest few and their shareholders. But what we are seeing in Calgary in the same sector is that Repsol was laying off 30 per cent of their workers from the Calgary office and Alberta field offices. Nexen was laying off workers.

Naming an act that it's open for business, that it's doing something for business doesn't create jobs. It's a deception that this act has anything to do with business. All it does is that it attacks workers' rights, it attacks their overtime pay, it cuts the pay for youth workers, it picks the pockets of young Albertans, and it doesn't create any more jobs. Being a student of economics, I can say that I haven't read any economic theory which says that cutting somebody's wages somehow magically creates more jobs.

The minister is saying that we have 21 per cent youth unemployment. Sure, we do have youth unemployment, but for those who are employed, cutting \$2 per hour from their wages doesn't create any more jobs. It won't change this number by any means. They are saying that by cutting overtime, they're opening up flexibility for workers and employers to negotiate. There is a huge power differential when you're working on minimum wage. I have personally worked on minimum wage pretty much until 2012. Before I got the law degree, I was working on minimum wage. I do understand how much flexibility you have to negotiate with your employer when you're working minimum wage, that this will be the overtime, this will be the holiday. You don't have that kind of flexibility when you're working on minimum wage.

That was the reason that this change was made under our watch, so that all Albertans who are working full-time are able to put food, and they're able to provide for their shelter. You're taking away food, taking away shelter from those who are working on minimum wages. It will not create jobs. Rather, it will push those Albertans into poverty, push those Albertans into conditions they shouldn't be living in.

The reason I am saying this is that, one, I have worked minimum wage, and also I represent a constituency which is among the constituencies that has the lowest median income. For instance, Saddle Ridge, the neighbourhood, has a population of 20,000 people, and the median income for those 15 years and older is \$30,000 as compared to the \$43,251 average for Calgary. And 30 per cent of the people in that neighbourhood are paying more than 30 per cent of their income on just shelter. That's why this bill is important for my constituents. Taradale: another neighbourhood with a population of almost 20,000. Their median income for the population 15 years and older is \$28,000 as compared to the average of \$43,251 for Calgary. Again, 31 per cent of the people living in Taradale are paying more than 30 per cent of their income just on shelter needs. Martindale, another neighbourhood, has an almost 15,000-plus population. The median income of the population 15 years and older is \$29,000 compared to the \$43,251 Calgary average.

**4:10**

These are neighbourhoods, these are my constituents, who oftentimes find themselves working more than one job and often in jobs that are minimum wage paying jobs. These things, these minimum wages, this overtime pay: those things matter to my constituents, and this bill is attacking the livelihood of the people who are living in these neighbourhoods. Those neighbourhood profiles are not any different from any other neighbourhood in the northeast.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]



For instance, the Calgary-North East neighbourhoods will be in the same position. The Calgary-Falconridge neighbourhoods will be in the same position. In no way, shape, or manner is this piece of legislation helping those in my riding, in my communities. No wonder the UCP's policies were rejected, your mandate was rejected in Calgary-McCall. That was the reason, because the changes you have made so far, cutting corporate taxes, in no way, shape, or manner helps us in these communities. It's benefiting some corporation, their multinational corporation and their shareholders, who may not be in Calgary altogether. They may be investors, but this is not helping create any jobs.

Instead, for those who are working, you're reducing their employment income by \$2 per hour and want us to believe that somehow there is some economic right-wing theory out there that suggests that that will create more jobs. I can tell you with absolute certainty – I have a master's in economics – that I didn't learn about any of that kind of economic theory that suggests that cutting wages somehow creates more employment. Cutting wages may improve the bottom line for businesses, but it doesn't create employment because businesses will only employ as much labour as they need. They will not create more jobs just because the wages are low. There is no such theory.

All these policies, all these ideological policies follow supply-side, trickle-down economics, which we have seen failing in the '80s, which we have seen failing in the '90s, which we have seen failing in the States, which we have seen failing in Britain, which we have seen failing in Canada under previous Conservative governments as well. Cutting taxes doesn't create jobs. Cutting taxes doesn't magically add investment to the economy.

What our economy is facing here is takeaway capacity, on which you haven't done anything. Instead, we entered into oil-by-rail contracts. You're cancelling that. That would have created, starting next week, almost 120,000 capacity. It would have created more opportunities for people to get employed, would have created more opportunities for businesses, but here we just listen to a narrative that somehow everything the UCP is doing is creating jobs, is helping businesses.

The Member for Calgary-Hays, his talking points are almost as old – I think I heard them when I came into this Legislature for the first time, that somehow the NDP is against businesses, they hurt profits, and the UCP and previous Conservative governments have a copyright on businesses. That's not the case. Similarly, the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore will say that we hate the oil sands, we are against pipelines, all those things. That's not true.

We also come from business families. My family has a small business. We have been employed by these businesses. We have worked in industry. We do come from a diverse range of expertise. We do know how economies are run. We do know how businesses are run. What the UCP is doing: I can tell you with absolute certainty that that's not how businesses are run. That's not how economies are run. That's how you can pick winners and losers. Yes, you can pick a side and try to benefit them left, right, and centre at the expense of working Albertans, everyday Albertans. You can give a \$4.5 billion tax break and not tell school boards across this province when they will get funding.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

My school board, the Calgary school board, my own trustee from my ward: she appeared in a CBC interview yesterday complaining about that uncertainty. They are a school who is still waiting to hear from this government whether they will get funding.

At the same time, you will get up here and tell us that we don't know how businesses are run, that you will give \$4.5 billion in tax

breaks and not commit to funding the school nutrition program that was feeding 30,000 kids, 30,000 young Albertans who cannot afford to go to school and have food. Their parents have to make a choice between sending them to school, providing for their needs, and feeding them. That was the program our government was funding. So, yes, we do have different priorities. A fair society, a balanced society, a balanced economy is one that watches out for everyone.

We have heard this ideological, trickle-down economic rhetoric during your campaign and during the debate here, but nothing much has changed since April 16. Albertans are still looking for work. They are still looking for this government – actually, I should say that a lot has been changed. There is a lot more uncertainty now. School boards are not sure whether they will get funding, cities are not sure whether they will get anything on MSI, and health authorities are not sure whether they will get funding. We are seeing projects like the Edmonton lab project getting cancelled just because they have to pay for the \$4.5 billion tax break.

In short, what I want to say is that this piece of legislation has nothing to do with business. It's not opening anything for business. All it is doing is attacking workers and their rights, that workers across this country enjoy in every other jurisdiction. It is changing the employment standards and labour relations changes that we made from 2015 onwards.

Every time the other side gets up, what we hear is that somehow they can blame everything on the four years that we were in government. This province, except for those four years from '15 to '19, always had Conservative governments. No reasonable Canadian, no reasonable Albertan will buy that only because of these four years Alberta is somehow facing some kinds of challenges.

There were previous Conservative governments for 43 years. They didn't do much to diversify the economy. I think the only economic policy they had was: let's get together and pray every morning that the oil price goes up to \$100 and it never comes down. That was the only economic policy they were following, and that policy failed every time we witnessed fluctuations in oil prices.

That's exactly what happened in 2015. Oil prices hit bottom. They were down to \$27 a barrel, and the choice was whether to cut services, cut education, cut health care or to provide for those things that Albertans rely on and need in times when they are struggling. We chose to fund education, to fund health care. I've said that before, will say it again, that from 2008 to 2013 not a single school was built in Calgary, not one school.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we are on amendment A2. Just a friendly reminder.

**Mr. Sabir:** I'm bringing it back to the amendment.

**The Chair:** I knew you were. Just wanted to make sure that we were on the same page.

**Mr. Sabir:** Just to finish that off, not a single school was built between 2008 and '13. We invested in 244 schools.

But here what we are seeing is that instead of doing anything to attract businesses to Alberta, they're just naming their act An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. Alberta was never closed for business. What you are doing here: the changes Alberta made between 2015 and 2019 you're reversing. Those changes are contained in two pieces of legislation, the employment standards and labour relations, so we should name this legislation appropriately and say that this act is amending those two pieces of legislation and taking away workers' rights that were provided in the last four years.

That's why this amendment is important, and I fully support and I urge all members of this House to support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4:20

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to address this House, through you, in support of Bill 2 and against this amendment. I would like to bring a blue-collar perspective on the matter of banked overtime. There's been a lot of theoretical debate on this issue, but I spent most of the last 25 years working in the nonsalaried and seasonal field of construction, which is similar to other seasonal jobs like many of the trades, road building, and similar to oil and gas workers, amongst many others. By bringing my practical perspective to this House, I hope that I can enlighten why this bill is so crucial for our economic future.

It is important to state at the beginning that this bill does not override any workers with contractual agreements. When I worked as an hourly paid employee, when I didn't work, I didn't get paid, making bad weather, appointments, sick children, and discretionary time off a challenge to the personal budget as well as the schedule. In this realm, nearly every job is procured in a realm of fixed costs: low bid, cost-plus, project management, negotiated bid, all with preset rates of pay. We used to love being able to work overtime when we could and get regular pay to cover those days off.

When the previous government changed the overtime payout to time and a half in an effort to help us, they actually hurt us. Why, Madam Chair? Because our bosses didn't have the flexibility to let us work extra time now for regular time off later. Overtime disappeared. It just didn't happen anymore. You can imagine the amount of stress this placed on the shoulders of Albertans who relied on overtime to make sure work-life balance was still a part of their lives. Having no opportunity or flexibility to take overtime meant missed appointments, missed holidays, missed family events, and so many of the small things that make getting up and working those long hours a little bit easier.

Where overtime didn't disappear, costs went way up, 50 per cent higher in many cases, and jobs were lost. Owners weren't happy because jobs took longer and cost more. Employers weren't happy because bidding became much harder, trying to predict how much overtime may or may not be required. Employees weren't happy because overtime hours disappeared. You can see here how the question of overtime becomes a lot more complex and the equation becomes less simple than time and a half meaning greater benefit to those who banked overtime. When you consider the implications of what this means, from the perspective of a job creator to the perspective of an employee, you start to understand why Albertans have supported the Bill 2 mandate.

Flexibility to work a few extra hours on Monday or Tuesday in order to take off early on a Friday or for a vacation or a doctor's appointment now just means time off without pay. We understood the concept of fair trade and that the favour done for the company today meant a favour given to us tomorrow. The changes proposed in Bill 2 directly respond to what workers who utilize overtime to balance the demands of work and home life have been asking for. By giving employees the ability to bank overtime hours in a way that suits their needs, we are empowering both employees and employers to come to agreements that consider both of their priorities.

But empowerment granted to workers and employees doesn't stop there, Madam Chair. Bill 2 is crucial to getting Alberta's economy back on track. That's why the barriers set on job creators

that limited our economic growth in the past are being undone by this bill. This bill will truly ensure that Albertans get back to work and that we ensure that Alberta remains open for business. Blue-collar workers across the province have built our industries by hand. From our skilled trade sector to our agricultural sector to our small businesses and the coming dreams of future entrepreneurs, there has never been a more crucial time to implement changes that will bring back the competitive edge to our economy, that once made our province a beacon for a brighter future anyone could access.

I know what this economic edge means first-hand, and so do my constituents. I have worked and succeeded in industries that have benefited from the Alberta advantage. My past experiences, including the stories of my friends, my neighbours, and previous co-workers, are a crucial part of why I'm standing in this House today and supporting the changes presented in this bill. We have all lived and experienced changes to legislation that have fundamentally affected our occupations and our ways of life. I know this legislation will change it for the better. That is why I support this bill and the name of this bill. I support blue-collar workers in construction and the trades and those working hard in my constituency. This bill's name represents them, what they want, and common sense. It gives them freedom.

I call upon my fellow members of this House to support this bill and support our efforts to grant workers the kinds of freedoms and opportunities of self-empowerment that they so clearly asked for. Thank you.

Madam Chair, I would like to rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 11 Fair Registration Practices Act

[Debate adjourned June 25: Mr. Bilous speaking]

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pleasure to have the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. I think it's fair to say that it's become clear that I disagree with this government on a number of issues. Certainly, we've had some robust discussion on a number of pieces of debate, and certainly we have had some different views of the facts, shall we say. Certainly, there are many portions of the UCP election platform that I was not shy to criticize, both during the election and

since, but what I can say is that on this particular bill I think indeed we have some common ground.

Over the last four years I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time talking with folks who have gone through the immigration process and have come here as newcomers to Canada, whether that was some of the individuals who came here with the group of Syrian refugees in early 2016 or people from a wide breadth of the African and Caribbean communities here in the city of Edmonton. Indeed, in talking with many of them, you know, many, many of them come to Canada with great expertise, knowledge, skills that they worked hard to earn in their home countries. But what I heard from many of them is that they face real and significant challenges in being able to find work in their field, those opportunities, when they arrive in Canada.

Now, the barriers they face can be many, Madam Speaker. Of course, a lot of them face, first of all, the challenges of language. For those who do not come from a country where English or French is a prominent language, they have the challenge of having to first learn English. It's unfortunate. Many times they are not treated with full respect and acknowledgement of the intelligence that they possess, the knowledge, the skill set because they do not yet have the ability to communicate it. That's the first challenge they face. They have to find time, then resources to be able to learn English while getting settled here in Canada.

4:30

Secondly, it can be a very challenging thing for them to learn how to navigate our systems. Of course, in many cases they're having to first of all learn how to navigate our culture, which itself can be enough of a shock. But on top of learning how our culture works and what the expectations are and then having to learn the language, they are then, thirdly, having to learn how to navigate our bureaucratic systems. Now, Madam Speaker, of course, as you are part of a government caucus that appointed an associate minister of red tape, I think you're well aware that not all government systems are clear and efficient. So they struggle with some of those things on that side.

Certainly, our government took some steps to try to clear that up, making it easier for some to access a driver's licence, to be able to get through some of the systems, clearing up some of the processes so that there were fewer obstacles in their path.

But the other challenge lies, as I'm sure you're aware, Madam Speaker, for those who have a professional designation that they wish to begin to make use of here in Canada, in that they then encounter a whole other bureaucratic system to get licensed, registered, and be able to practise. Now, it's understandable that we have a system to vet individuals that want to work in these professions because we recognize, of course, that within these professions there are great amounts of responsibility. If someone wishes to work in a medical field, they are taking on, well, frankly, the care and support of an individual's life. It's incredibly important that we be sure that the qualifications they possess, the training that they have, the experience they've gained are going to translate and that they fully understand what differences there might be between practices in their home country and how things are practised and what the expectations are here.

The same goes for law, engineering, any of these fields in which an individual might have a professional designation, indeed even something as basic as accounting, though I imagine the Member for Red Deer-South would probably contest suggesting that accounting was somehow less of a complex field than law or another field. Accounting itself also has incredibly important implications. There are a lot that can make a big difference to somebody's business, some of these things, so it makes sense that we would also want to

make sure somebody coming here properly understood Canadian laws, businesses, et cetera, what the expectations and rules were, indeed, Canadian tax law, et cetera.

We recognize, however, that in some cases individuals are experiencing extensive delays, and they're having a difficult time trying to figure out how to navigate the process of working with these different independent bodies, which are rightfully set up to help safeguard the professional standards of their particular occupations. What I heard from individuals was that, yeah, in many cases they felt that they were not being given the chance to move forward at all, that they found it difficult to navigate the process, that they found it difficult to get information to understand what the next steps and expectations were, and that processes were extended for quite some time.

Our government looked to take some action on this as well. A lot of this discussion came up during the time that the then Minister of Education, now the Member for Edmonton-North West, spent many weeks going across the province speaking with individuals from multiple cultural communities as part of our consultation on how the government could help support Albertans in pushing back against racism and discrimination. Now, that is not to suggest, Madam Speaker, that professional bodies, in their work to vet candidates in the profession and to help them gain their qualifications, are engaging in discrimination. But it is something that came up in that conversation as one of many barriers that individuals who came here to Canada from other countries faced in trying to get ahead and establish themselves here.

We heard from many that they had difficulties working through this process, so our government created a fund and put some investment into that to start looking at if we could create some tools that would help these particular professional organizations be able to do a better job of vetting candidates and assess not only their actual academic qualifications and certifications but also their experience and real-world skill set gained in their time in their area of employment.

Of course, we had the election that came, so we had the change in government. I applaud this government for stepping forward with their own solution to this problem. We have here Bill 11, which is going to put in some clearer standards for professional organizations in the province – that will help provide clearer expectations for individuals that are working through those processes – creating a fair registration practices office, removing any unfair barriers to licensure, improving procedural fairness of how licences are processed, requiring that they provide an interim assessment decision within six months, having the regulatory bodies provide reports on their registration practices as requested, and allowing the minister to perform audits and issue compliance orders if necessary.

I think those are good first steps, Madam Speaker. I think those are reasonable. We are adding, I guess, some additional oversight, what some might call red tape, but frankly I'm not averse to creating such processes when it is appropriate and necessary. That is the very reason we have regulation. We recognize that there are systems that are not working or may not be working to their ideal level, so we introduce things into those systems to help steer them into a better path.

Within Bill 11 it also, then, requires that regulatory bodies assess applications and communicate their decisions within a very specific time frame. That's six months initially, which provides, I think, a good deal more certainty for individuals when they're first coming to Canada. They know that: "Okay. I've put in my paperwork. I've filled out all the applications. I've done all the things I needed to do. I will have an answer within six months. That will at least give me an indication of whether I indeed will have the opportunity to move forward in my field or not."

By requiring the organizations to provide reports to the minister, we have the opportunity then for government to better understand how these processes are working. Again, these are independent bodies, and I think for those of us in government – although we have constituents that come to us to express their concerns about what they're experiencing in the process, I have to admit, Madam Speaker, I don't personally know all of the steps that one must go through, if you're coming from another country, to be certified as an engineer or an accountant or a medical doctor in the province of Alberta. Having the opportunity for them to submit regular reports as directed by the minister, to provide more information about the process, the steps they are taking to ensure that they are all doing their due diligence: I think that is a reasonable and good step forward.

We will have the fair registration practices office. I think that's a good thing to have. They are going to work directly with the licensing bodies to see how we can streamline, simplify, and accelerate foreign credential recognition. I think that's a good step. You know, I recognize that this government has taken a similar step in other cases. They're doing a full review of Alberta Health Services to similarly look for efficiencies. I think that's reasonable. I look forward to seeing that report. In a similar way it makes sense here, I think, that we have some folks dedicated in government who will be able to sit down and work with the trade and professional licensing bodies to take a look at the processes that are in place, to talk through it and discuss it with them, to have it a bit of an arm's length from the political process.

Again, Madam Speaker, as much as I have constituents who've come to me to express concerns about how they were treated in a particular hospital or decisions that were made by a particular physician, as an MLA I don't feel that it's appropriate for me, from a political lens, to go in and question the judgment of a medical professional. In the same way, however, we do have within Alberta Health Services, within the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta avenues by which they can do that. Folks who also have medical expertise can sit down and have that discussion. We have those avenues within government and government agencies. Similarly, within the fair registration practices offices we will have folks who have the knowledge and the skill set, who are not politically motivated, who can sit down and work with these licensing bodies to make sure that they are providing the best opportunity for folks who have the skills, who have the knowledge, who could be making great contributions to our economy and to our communities to have the opportunity to do so as quickly as possible.

4:40

Part of the work also will be publicly identifying and holding accountable regulatory bodies that have unreasonable barriers to credential recognition. This is again, I think, a reasonable thing. If we are going to hold organizations to a particular standard, it makes sense that we would have folks in place to measure if they're meeting that standard and, if they are not, to have some means to hold them to account. However, I am interested to find out a bit more detail about this to get a better understanding of the suggestions of what penalties there might be or what approaches might be taken.

Again, Madam Speaker, while I certainly recognize that this is a problem that needs to be addressed, we want to be careful in how we approach things with these licensing and regulatory bodies. We want to do this in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration. We don't want to, I think, come out of the gate with an antagonistic stance. Let's save that for the pipeline war room.

I would say that what we want is to first of all be able to sit down at the table and have some good, fruitful discussion for the fair registration practices office, to be able to have those discussions, better understand the systems in place, talk about what changes can

be made, look at how these organizations can best implement this initial requirement for an interim decision within six months, and from there be able to look at how we work with organizations that we may feel are not being as flexible.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was very interested in what the Member for Edmonton-City Centre was speaking about. The last point he was making was talking about holding to account those regulatory bodies and colleges and other organizations that somehow do not meet up to the expectations that are identified in this bill, the Fair Registration Practices Act. I was just wondering what approaches he thought should be taken to ensure that there is fruitful discussion and that changes happen for the benefit of the person with the foreign qualifications that is being judged by these colleges and organizations but is not making their way through to licensure. I wonder if he could talk more about that and what the outcome might be if that organization or college doesn't address this in a fashion that's conclusive and helpful to the person who is trying to get their foreign qualifications study.

Thank you.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for that question. As I was saying, I think it's very important that we approach this in a spirit of collaboration with these organizations but, indeed, that we find ways to find them accountable. I myself am looking forward to sitting down and having some discussions. I have reached out, in my role as the opposition Health critic, to the College of Physicians & Surgeons, the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta, and some others in the medical field to have the opportunity to get their thoughts on how this legislation may affect them and get their thoughts on sort of how they see these systems working in their particular fields and what kinds of steps we might be able to take in conjunction with government to streamline the process for individuals coming from outside of Canada to work in those fields.

The Member for Calgary-Buffalo was asking sort of, I guess, my thoughts on what might be appropriate steps to take. Certainly, I have read that there is the opportunity for monetary fines. I think that's a reasonable step to have in place. We see that being an effective measure in everything from parking to condominium associations and all the way up the chain. I think that's a reasonable tool to have in the tool box here.

I think that we would not want to move immediately to monetary fines. I think it would be reasonable to have the opportunity, as we do, say, within health and safety and other areas, for them to be issued a warning, for them to be issued a reprimand, for other steps to be taken first. Certainly, if an organization is found to be continually failing to support new Albertans and new Canadians in fairly gaining access to the opportunity to work in a particular field, a monetary fine of an amount significant enough that it would get their attention would be a reasonable step.

Now, I have heard that within the discussion of bringing in the legislation, there was mention of removing the ability of a regulatory body to continue to function in that purpose. That seems challenging, Madam Speaker. I'd be interested to hear a bit more of the thought process with that. I can't see how we could remove the ability of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta to licence physicians and surgeons because we do not have a backup, and that is the case with most of these organizations. I recognize that would probably be considered a fairly extreme step, but I'm not even sure it's a step that would be capable of being carried out.

I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to learn a bit more about this bill and have some more discussion in that regard. But, ultimately, to return to where I began, Madam Speaker, this bill, I think, is an excellent opportunity for us to have some bipartisan goodwill in this House. There are some very good things in this piece of legislation. I one hundred per cent support the goals that the government has in bringing this forward. I applaud them for doing so. I think this is an important discussion to highlight. It also gives us the chance within the province to have greater recognition of the value that newcomers bring to our province at a time when, unfortunately, we are hearing many voices of prejudice.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak in favour of this bill. This bill is really providing some hope to, I will say, the issues that are very real and very close to my personal experience and the issues of our communities.

Madam Speaker, speaking to this bill, I really wanted to share some of the stories that I have heard from the people I have had, you know, the privilege to meet and listen to their first-hand experience on issues related to this. When I first moved to Canada in 1993, I had a chance to meet a person. Actually, the person really actually attracted me to and provided a platform to engage in active politics in Alberta. The man happened to be one of the candidates. He was contesting for Mill Woods for MLA.

This gentleman moved to Canada in 1968. He would share his stories, like how he has worked hard in, you know, forestry in B.C., then he was working on the farms here in Alberta. He was working for an employer in his nursery somewhere in Edmonton. It was all of a sudden that the conversation broke and the employer really actually wanted to know about him and asked about his background. The member explained that he has, you know, a master's in English. He is a postgraduate. And the employer was stunned to learn that the person who was working in his nursery was a highly, highly educated person and how this was a missed opportunity that he never got to use his education, experience, and skills; not only a lost opportunity for him, but also a lost opportunity for us here in Canada, Alberta, and in Edmonton. Not only that, but the employer was so impressed and touched by his story that I think he was able to arrange the media and break this story in the media.

4:50

I remember another incident, sitting at the family socials, where a friend of ours, you know, reiterated a reference to one of his friends, that we already knew: "You know this friend. He has a PhD in this." And we were surprised. We knew him for a long time but never knew his educational background. "Oh, you have a PhD?" And he replied: "Oh, yeah. A kind of PhD." We were surprised, you know? What did he really mean by "kind of PhD"? He said, "I'm always saying, 'kind of PhD,' because this is a PhD I had, but with the time I spent and worked on that PhD, it never really worked for me."

That is the kind of experience that I really wanted to share. The reason we wanted to support this bill is in the hope that the bill provides some solution to these people going forward.

I also wanted to share stories as I had the opportunity to work in the taxi industry for a year or so where I was privileged to, you know, form the association for the taxi industry where we could just come together, share stories, and address some of the issues and challenges we were facing. I was surprised to see that the people around had degrees, they were graduates of world-class, recognized

universities, but they never happened to get a chance to show their real talent and find jobs in their field because of red tape in this area.

I recently was talking to a fellow born and raised in Malaysia. He's a young fellow in his late 20s. He's a cardiologist. I was offering, if he's willing to come to Canada, if he wanted to see if this would be a good place for him. You know, he blatantly declined. "No, no, no. Not Canada. I don't even consider thinking about Canada." He said: "I have no plan to spend five, six more years in university. I have already spent enough time of my life learning, so I will not be spending another six years there. I would rather think of something else. I would rather think about the U.S.A., not Canada."

These are the kinds of challenges – I just wanted to share stories – that the ethnic communities are facing when they come from their own countries with the experience and the education that they have. They not only can choose the place where they can make their life better, but they can also probably contribute with their talent and experience to make this society better for all. By supporting this bill, this is one thing that I can go back to my constituents with and I can give them some hope that, going forward, our next generation or generations to come might not go through the same experience.

I wanted to refer to some of the stories. I know a friend of mine, my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, shared some of the, you know, problems he sees in this – I don't know – the potential problems, and how they can be hurdles to achieve the goal we are setting in this bill. But I really wanted to share the stories I heard from the people, our seniors. They migrated to Canada in the '60s. They will tell stories, you know: "When we came, we were prepared for whatever job we would get. We knew that our degrees would not probably be recognized, that we would not probably be able to find jobs in the field that we were qualified to do."

That was the time that Alberta was going through the crisis, and they were, you know, anxiously looking for the professionals who could help them in the education system. They were looking for teachers, and they were looking for professionals. That message resonated, and the people from back home with degrees in education, like a B.Ed., moved here. They were able to help our education system in the rural areas, the rural communities. They tell stories that this is not the case anymore.

Madam Speaker, I'm so humbled and honoured and feeling privileged to support this common-sense legislation that will help the skilled newcomers to find jobs in their fields. It's not only help for them; it is help for us. We can take advantage. We can use their real assets. They can use their talent to contribute to this society, contribute to this society to make it better. The diversity in the province is our strength. Ensuring that newcomers have fair access to support for credentials will strengthen our workforce.

While we are pleased to see this government is taking this action on this important issue, this work is not new. We also, you know, really wanted to bring to attention that successive Alberta governments have worked on this, and we need to get full progress in this area. It is something very, very little that we can dwell on.

My riding of Edmonton-Meadows is one of the most diverse ridings in Alberta communities. You know, even I went through this issue. Getting credentials evaluated is huge. By supporting this bill, I'm so proud. I'm feeling so proud that I had the opportunity to give my input on behalf of not only constituents but the fellow Albertans who actually were not able to use their talents and their education due to lack of, I would say, programming or law or regulation.

5:00

I will be brief on this in my closing remarks. Once again, I wanted to say this: we have lots of hope from this bill, and I will expect that we will see some outcomes, contrary to, as I mentioned, successive governments. They have touched this issue, but we did not see much help from this in the past. Many times we have seen these issues debated in the elections and similar steps proposed, but the people in our communities did not really see something moving forward. Today by supporting this bill, I have lots of hope. So when I go back to my riding and I talk to my constituents, I will say that the government is serious, this House is serious.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There's a storm brewing outside.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 11, Fair Registration Practices Act. I want to say at the outset that I will be speaking in principle in favour of this legislation. It's an important issue. It's personally important to me. It's important to many living in my riding and across Alberta, in particular those who chose to make Canada home. When they come with qualifications from other countries, it's a challenge to get them recognized here. That's the reason that I will be speaking in favour of it.

Personally, I can say that I came with a master's degree in economics and I've been through this process. I can say it's a difficult process; it's a long process. There is no streamlined kind of procedure or one office where you can go to, in fact, to just get the evaluation done. Oftentimes different institutions have different requirements, so there is no such overarching kind of evaluation body whose evaluation will be acceptable throughout Alberta, throughout Canada. That is one issue that I faced, and I'm sure that there are many Albertans here who will share these stories, how recognition of their qualification is a hurdle, is a barrier for them starting a new life here in Alberta, here in Canada.

I can also say that education comes with a lot of benefits. It improves your personal lives, increases your earning potential, increases your economic well-being and stability, and helps us create more fair and prosperous societies. If we want this province to be a place which offers opportunity for everyone, that's one issue that we must address by removing those barriers, removing these hurdles that newcomers face in terms of getting their credentials recognized, that essentially hinders their full participation in the economy, in society, and that hinders them from realizing their full potential. That should be and that is unacceptable in a fair and just society.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I have heard many times before that the credentials that many newcomers rely upon to immigrate to Canada were good enough to get them that immigration, but once they land in Canada, once they get to any province, then those credentials are no longer valid. Those credentials no longer are helpful in landing them the job in their profession or the job appropriate to their training. This is not a new issue, and I'm sure the Premier, who once was the minister of immigration, must have heard about this issue before. But in our communities, newcomer communities, that's not something that he's known for. He certainly had the opportunity to make a difference, but, no, that's not something that he is known for in our communities. Rather, from his time in federal government and immigration, in my communities, in our communities people may

know him from niqab citizenship ceremonies. They may remember him for cuts to refugees and newcomers' health benefits, and they may remember him for bungling the temporary foreign worker file. They may remember him from the barbaric cultural practices hotline and things like that. But I think that's not the topic today.

We are talking about the recognition of these credentials, and it's certainly a good initiative. As I said, I will be supporting it, but I will also outline some of my concerns that I have with respect to this piece of legislation.

As I mentioned, that's not a brand new initiative. Many previous governments, federal and provincial, have worked on it. It still remains an issue, and the hope is that this time around we will be able to make some progress. Back when we were in government in 2017, the Premier committed to taking action against racism after six Muslims were killed in a Quebec City mosque. There were extensive consultations led by my colleague, then Minister of Education, the Edmonton-North West MLA. He met over a hundred groups. I was part of those consultations in Calgary, in Edmonton, in Red Deer, in Lethbridge, and also in Fort Mac. I personally was part of those consultations.

Out of those consultations we heard many things. There were almost eight or nine key recommendations. Two of them were implemented right away, one creating an antiracism advisory council and then creating an antiracism grant program. Those two initiatives were implemented right after the release of the report.

5:10

There were other things that were brought forward by the groups that we consulted. One of those things was foreign worker credentials and qualifications, career mentorship programs, and there were other things as well. I think I should mention a few others: provincial hate crime unit, funding the Alberta Hate Crimes Committee, updating the provincial curriculum, and expanding a number of languages in our school system. With respect to foreign qualification recognition we established a foreign qualification recognition fund as well, and we were in the process of engaging further with the communities across this province.

As has been outlined in the legislation, there are a number of bodies that have been included in this one. As I said, it's a complex issue. It's not the first time that some government is trying to resolve it, but we didn't see any consultation with respect to this with these organizations and bodies that are listed in schedule 1. It's a long list of bodies, and as much as I want these credentials to be recognized, I'm mindful that we need to make sure that we are getting it right and we are doing it in a way that ensures that those credentials are equal to what the standards are here in Canada, that those credentials are equal to what standards have been set by these self-governing professions in order to serve the best interests of Albertans, in order to maintain the high standards of professionalism in different professions across our province. That's certainly very important.

In order to get that right, I think we need to work with these bodies across our province, these self-governing organizations, as well as those communities, those individuals who are in the process of getting these credentials recognized. There are many organizations. For instance, just in my own riding there are two or three organizations that I can name. MDI is an organization of doctors who are foreign trained, and it's basically a support group trying to help each other, members, newcomers, to get their test and get their credentials recognized. Similarly, there is another organization, the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America, APPNA. Last week I went to the inauguration of their Alberta chapter. Essentially, that organization is, among other things, providing support to foreign-qualified doctors to get their

credentials recognized. Similarly, there is ABEC, an organization of foreign-qualified engineers who are, among other things, helping newcomers to get their credentials recognized.

Those organizations, I think, will be in a position to help this government understand the viewpoints of those who are going through this process, to understand what issues and challenges they are facing, what their concerns are. Certainly, my hope is that at some point this government will consult these organizations. When we look at the legislation, it provides for an initial decision, an interim decision within six months, and after that every decision is, I guess, subject to a reasonable time. There is no clarity. There is no certainty to what reasonable time would mean. Certainly, in every case that would mean something different. Getting a medical credential recognized may be different than getting a credential in economics recognized because it's not a self-governing profession.

So there are a lot of details that are still not there. I understand that that will take some time, but there is no process outlined, as such, as to when we will see those things in place. A lot of the work has been left to regulations, but again my hope is that before drafting these regulations, the government will take the time to reach out to those individuals, reach out to these bodies like MDI, APPNA, ABEC to get the input, get the feedback about their concerns, about their issues.

There are other things that also need to be looked at that at this time are not in this draft legislation, and I'm hoping that some of those things may make it to regulations. One thing is about the evaluation body. Like, there is, for instance, IQAS, I think, an organization that provides evaluation services. But I think what we need to do, from my practical experience, from my conversations with many newcomers who are in the process of getting their credentials recognized, is that there needs to be an evaluating body whose evaluation is acceptable throughout the province, preferably throughout Canada, so that you don't have to get a new evaluation every time you apply for something. Some universities, some postsecondaries have their own evaluation system.

Again, there needs to be conversations with postsecondaries, with institutions, with these colleges, with professional bodies, with those individuals, with evaluating bodies to have that . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments, a five-minute question and comment period. I see the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women standing.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. It's been really nice to hear some of the responses coming from our colleagues in this place to help bring forward this legislation. There are a few things I just wanted to bring up. First of all, and maybe this has just been my luck and the way that things go, having had this portfolio even just for a short period of time, just over two months now, with the multiculturalism piece and with culture, the outreach into the community has been immensely – for lack of a better word, I'm overjoyed with the amount of time and energy that you get to spend with so many wonderful people and new Canadians especially.

Without a doubt, almost everywhere I go, every single time, every group that I'm with, somebody comes up to me and mentions to me that the Premier was the one who brought them into the country, that he was part of that when he had immigration, that he was the one who actually signed the papers that brought them into the country. Everywhere I go. It's actually quite unbelievable. You hear those things, that he was the best immigration minister that Canada ever had, and then you actually go out into the world, and you see these people who literally come up to you and say: did you

know that your Premier actually signed my papers to come into this country? On top of that, multiculturalism is a part of his personality. He actually took it with him into every other portfolio that he held. That is how important this profile is to him.

5:20

The opposition was talking yesterday, and I think it was the former Minister of Education who was speaking about how some of the ideas that he had brought forward maybe were something that simulated this. You know, good ideas come from a lot of different places. But to his point, there has been a long-standing issue about making sure that professional designations are brought forward. I think the part that was probably the most interesting to me – and I have to quote this. I'll actually read from my notes here. In terms of why the legislation is being proposed, just to be clear, it is to ensure that newcomers and all Albertans are successfully employed and that they're able to contribute to the Alberta economy in their skill levels, and the legislation introduced measures to ensure that regulated professions and trades and registration practices are transparent, that they are objective, impartial, and fair.

Pretty straightforward. The goal is to achieve that balance between responsibility that ensures safety, especially like the member across the way was talking about with doctors and other professions that especially require that piece of it, and actually other professions as well, and the independence of the regulatory bodies, and our commitment is to ensure that that registration and practices are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair.

Interestingly enough, when I read the *Hansard* from yesterday of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar – and, you know, I happily would open my office doors any time for multiculturalism to explain to the member about the intersectionality of the people and, really, how important it is that we actually create an inclusive space. Maybe he might want to come and see me and talk to me about this.

We don't need a fair registration practices office poking its nose into the Ministry . . .

I think he was talking about Advanced Education at the time.

. . . 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.

I think, Mr. Speaker, he missed the point. This is actually about people who have been attracted to this country, who have worked so hard. To the point of the member across the way about how difficult it is, how hard this process is: we hear heartbreaking stories every single day of how much when people come here – they were really resilient before they even entered the country of Canada. Then they have to go through the process of becoming a Canadian. Then, on top of that, they have to hopefully get their professional designations to acknowledge the work and who they were when they came to this country, the whole reason for coming here.

Yet we have a member from that side who, in so many words, basically says: no; that's not important. Poking its nose: are you kidding me? This is about transparency and making sure that people who are coming here, new Canadians, are recognized for their value, their worth, so they are able to live positive, wonderful, fulfilling lives in a province that really, really is set up to make sure that those folks can function here.

I also wanted to outline quickly that he also mentioned yesterday that he doesn't think that "there's any additional value to be found in creating a fair registration practices office with people whose qualifications are unknown at this point." That is the point, Mr. Speaker.

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

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood standing to speak to the bill.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise on Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act. You know, it's not often in my short tenure here that I've been able to rise and be supportive of things in this House, so this is new. But this is okay because we need to recognize at times that there are issues that are not about partisanship, for sure, but about doing the right thing.

My riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is a very diverse one, made up of many people from countries all around the world. I know the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore had a chance to visit it just the other day.

**Mrs. Aheer:** It's an awesome riding.

**Member Irwin:** It sounds like she enjoyed it.

You know, as I said, a lot of folks come from all over the world to our neighbourhoods. In fact, some of my friends were actually at the announcement, so it's kind of interesting to be able to speak about this.

I know that the members for Calgary-McCall and Edmonton-Meadows shared some really important personal stories. Obviously, I can't share anything from my own life, but I can share the stories of many others.

My own doctor is actually from Libya, and she's amazing. I actually went for years here without a family doctor. I just couldn't seem to get one. I know that for every doctor like mine, there are many others who haven't yet had their credentials recognized. I've heard from some of those folks in my own neighbourhood as well. You know, we're so lucky to be able to attract such incredible talent to our province and to our country.

You know, many years ago I spent a summer in Toronto, and I volunteered at something called job camp, which was put on by Youth Employment Services of Toronto. There I heard first-hand the stories of many newcomers, countless people, who just arrived in the city and who were struggling and were looking for any sort of job and employment advice. Their credentials just weren't being recognized, and in many cases they felt like they were being treated as less than human. As I said, I mean, these stories are innumerable across our province and our country.

I know that many of my constituents will be so happy to hear about this work to ensure that we are going to collaborate and to help ensure that their credentials are being recognized and that this government is continuing the work that we started, that our NDP caucus is here for them and for their families. We know how important it is that education and experience be recognized, that their credentials be considered equal to those of their counterparts.

It's about respect. It's about valuing work and labour. It's about valuing the contributions of our neighbours. It's about equality. It's about fairness. These are the values of the NDP, and these are my values. So to the newcomers out there, many of whom I'm so proud to call friends: we're going to continue to fight to ensure that you get treated equitably because you give so much to our province and to our country and you deserve that recognition.

In fact, our Premier noted just the other day that too often we hear stories about doctors-driving-cabs syndrome. So we're going to be taking action. It's not about, you know – and he's certainly not saying this either – demeaning those who drive cabs. These are very important jobs. It's about having those credentials recognized.

As I said, I've heard those stories, many of them, from folks in my own riding. Our country, our province has been able to attract incredible people, but too many of them struggle for years, sometimes even decades, when their credentials aren't being recognized. When they struggle, it's a great loss to our country because we need their skills and we need them to be realizing their full potential. We also know that this affects more than just their

own families and their communities; in some cases it's their own mental health and sense of worth. We know that when Albertans are treated equitably, all of society benefits. Fairness is important to Albertans. We've seen that in a lot of cases. This bill aids in fairness.

Now, Bill 11, the Fair Registration Practices Act, would remove barriers, would speed up the processes where possible, would hold professional bodies accountable, and, as I said, would increase fairness. It's enabling legislation that would provide the authority to create a fair registration practices office; would reduce, in theory, some of the red tape associated with this whole credentialing process; would work with regulators; and would try to maintain Alberta's high professional standards.

Someone I respect greatly is Barry Cavanaugh. He is the CEO of the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta. He noted that his own professional association has long since adopted high standards of fairness in their admission practices, and as a result they're happy to see this work moving forward. As I said, this is an important step in equality.

If the moral and the societal benefits don't sway you, well, let's look at some of the economic benefits here. According to the Conference Board of Canada Canadians would earn up to \$17 billion more annually if their credentials were fully recognized, and of course immigrants are the largest group here, with an estimated 524,000 of those folks being affected by a lack of recognition. In fact, after doing a little digging, these numbers vary depending on the report that you look at.

According to 2016 stats Canada-wide this is an issue that affects nearly 1 million immigrants. A report released in January 2016 said that nearly 850,000 Canadians, over 60 per cent of whom are immigrants, end up underemployed or unemployed because their credentials are not recognized in our country. In fact, a 2012 report found in a survey of 50,000 cab drivers across Canada that 200 were doctors or had PhDs and that 20 per cent of drivers who immigrated to Canada had at least an undergrad level or a master's degree level.

We know as well that many other jurisdictions have addressed this issue and have taken these steps earlier. Provinces like Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia have this fairness legislation in place.

5:30

So I am quite hopeful, and I want to repeat that I am quite hopeful about this bill. I'm quite hopeful to see that this government is moving forward with something that affects so many Albertans and Canadians, but I think it's also important to temper my optimism a little bit. It's really critical that this bill be executed, be implemented correctly and that they get the regulations right on this.

There are a few specifics here. For instance, we know that the Labour and Immigration minister will have the authority to intervene in individual cases. He will then, in turn, be able to work with regulators to ensure that the processes are fair and issue orders if they're not complying. Of course, all of these expectations will be laid out in the legislation, but I do have some worry because some individuals may still feel that their concerns aren't being fully acknowledged and that they're not getting a timely enough response.

There are a whole number of organizations listed: the Alberta Association of Architects, for example; Alberta College of Optometrists; Alberta Insurance Council – I'm just picking a few here because these are some pretty significant bodies – the Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta; let's see, the college of midwives of Alberta. Again, the list goes on and on. We're talking about countless organizations. We know that these organizations



will have six months to provide applicants with an interim decision, which could include advice on what is needed, what additional documentation, what extra training is needed or required. But there won't be a deadline for an applicant to receive a final decision because these different professions do have different requirements, different criteria set out under each of their practices.

We do know that any organizations that are issued compliance orders may face a fine of up to \$50,000. Will that be enough to deter and to ensure that organizations are following? I'm not sure. Again, I think this is where the regulations and the implementation are going to be so, so important.

We know that the minister can, under this proposed act, perform audits and can ask for those and ask for detailed reports into how any of these organizations are in fact operating. My concern will be that with the lack of a specific or standardized deadline across bodies, things could be delayed. Of course, if we're talking about the case of someone who's trying to support their family, too much of a delay could certainly be problematic. Again, I think it's incumbent upon all of us to ensure that some of these specifics are quite clear because if we're going to take this step forward, we need to get it fully right.

Now, I want to just talk a little bit as well about some of the work that the Member for Calgary-McCall talked about as well. We know that we heard loudly and clearly from Albertans through things like the antiracism consultations. I wasn't as involved as that member was, but I was tangentially involved in some of the consultations and some of the organizing of that. In reading and in hearing some of the reports from those consultations, we did hear loudly and clearly that action needs to be taken. That's exactly why we invested in a foreign qualification recognition fund and started to take steps to ensure that Albertans were treated fairly. We expect and we hope that the government will take the necessary steps to ensure that any interactions with those professional regulatory bodies and associations are done in a timely and, I guess, a standardized manner.

I think what I'll do is I'll close by just – I've praised this government for the steps that they're taking. But, yeah, I just want to ensure that we move forward with this in a way that truly will be fair and be respectful. Again, I'm here as the voice of the constituents of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, many of whom are new Canadians, many of whom have shared with me their struggles as they arrived in our country. I just urge us to really listen to each other and listen to their voices as we move forward with Bill 11.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a second time]

## Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

[Adjourned debate June 25: Ms Savage]

**The Acting Speaker:** Do I see any members looking to speak to Bill 12? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to my hon. colleagues for this opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 12, the Royalty Guarantee Act. The Royalty Guarantee Act is an important step towards strengthening investor confidence in our province's oil and

gas sector. This act will provide long-term certainty to investors by affirming that the current royalty structure will be maintained for at least 10 years. I'm also glad to say that this guarantee is a platform promise and demonstrates the United Conservative Party's commitment to stand up for Albertans and to create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things I want to touch on. Our province has had a couple of royalty reviews in the last 11 or 12 years, one in 2007-2008 and another one in 2016. I want to touch on the great uncertainty that this caused to our oil and gas producers and our companies. Of course, we know that one of the things that businesses crave is certainty. In a competitive world, in a world where it's sometimes hard to control and manage and budget your costs, what a company doesn't need is surprises.

I want to talk about how I saw the royalty review in 2007-2008 and what it did to Medicine Hat and what it did to our good oil and gas companies down there. Mr. Speaker, for a start, I'd like to give you a little bit of background on Medicine Hat. Of course, we're the Gas City. We have developed a tremendous amount of oil, a tremendous amount of natural gas for all Albertans, for all Canadians. We have been leaders, like so many other people in Alberta, so many other parts of Alberta, in ensuring that natural gas was a valuable commodity produced at a good price for Albertans to use.

Just a little history, Mr. Speaker. Not a lot of people know that in 1907 Rudyard Kipling coined the phrase that Medicine Hat was an area with all hell for a basement. Interestingly, at the time the citizens of Medicine Hat were actually thinking of changing the name to Gasburg. Thank goodness that they kept the Blackfoot tradition. The words "hat" and "medicine" kind of come from the Blackfoot word "Saamis," and that continued. That shows the connection that the southeastern part of our province, that the good people of southeastern Alberta and Medicine Hat have to the oil and gas industry, have to the removal of carbon, and have to promoting that.

Mr. Speaker, it only got better. Right next door to Medicine Hat is the Suffield Block, hundreds and hundreds of square miles where the British army three or four times a year brings in approximately 2,500 soldiers to train, where the Canadian government and Canadian scientists for years have conducted first-rate research. It's been an amazing partnership between the Canadian government, the British soldiers that train, and our good oil and gas business. It's one of the areas where Alberta Energy in the '70s first developed, where Albertans and Canadians got really, really good at extracting natural gas and oil and sharing the wealth. Some years our area paid billions of dollars in royalties to the Alberta Treasury.

5:40

Mr. Speaker, here's what happened without the certainty that we're going to see Bill 12 provide in the Royalty Guarantee Act. When the first royalty was conducted in 2008, the government at the time was told by our good producers that the margins were tight, but other jurisdictions offered more certainty and more opportunity, and if they persisted, many would leave. What happened is that five or six big ones, good employers, did leave as the royalty review was happening, costing our city, costing our area tens and tens of jobs, costing the wealth and the income that that would circulate. That's one of the reasons that I am so pleased to see that the Royalty Guarantee Act – and I'll say it again – affirms that the current royalty structure will be maintained for at least 10 years, the certainty that these companies need to provide the jobs, invest the tens and tens of millions in capital to make it happen.

Mr. Speaker, the Royalty Guarantee Act will help restore Alberta's competitive advantage. It's a guarantee. It's a major step towards assuring investors that Alberta is a stable place to invest. I want to

talk a little bit, too, about how important that is from my business background and my experience, the number of times I've talked to our good, hard-working job creators and small-business people, oil and gas and otherwise, that are lucky to eke out a 2, 3, or 4 per cent return at the end of the year. As a matter of fact, I had coffee this morning with an executive who's in a fairly big business, who told me that at the year-end they feel lucky if they make 4 per cent of their revenue. This is why they need certainty. A small change can wipe out investment dollars. Worse yet, it can kill jobs. That is why this certainty is crucial, and that's why I'm such a supporter of the Royalty Guarantee Act here at second reading.

Mr. Speaker, the uncertainty created by an open-end wholesale review of our royalty structure, like was done in 2008, like the past government just did in 2016, that froze investment, caused uncertainty, lost jobs, will not be done under this government because of the Royalty Guarantee Act. Investors will no longer need to worry that the rules in Alberta will change at the halfway mark, halfway through a project. We're recommending a guarantee of no major changes to the oil and gas royalty structure for at least 10 years. We're also guaranteeing that once a well starts producing, it will be under the same royalty system for the same length of time.

Mr. Speaker, I reached out and I talked to some oil and gas investors who felt that that 10 years was absolutely adequate, that felt that the 10 years was a strong guarantee, coupled with a free enterprise and a business-focused government, coupled with the good work of my colleague the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. That's a problem, too. Absolutely. This will restore hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in the Alberta oil and natural gas business to make sure that we can stay being a leader.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about what the last government also did to our good producers, that can't be forgotten. At the same time as they put them through another royalty review in 2016, freezing investment, scaring the creation of jobs, there was a 20 per cent provincial tax hike – a 20 per cent provincial tax hike – that made us not competitive, and a carbon tax that other competing jurisdictions didn't have that led to carbon leakage, that made it harder on rural Alberta, made it harder on our not-for-profits and on our school divisions, but also made it much, much harder on our families, with food costs, with gas costs, and made it much, much harder on our oil and gas producers because of the costs.

Then there were the signals that the last government used to show when the Leader of the Opposition, as Premier, refused to stand up to foreign interference in our oil and gas industry to land-lock our resources, never mind even acknowledge it. Many of the past government's cabinet were seen protesting our great hydrocarbon industry, never mind what the other half of their party, the federal party, said with the Leap Manifesto, never mind a 100-megatonne cap on emissions. It was a clear signal that they did not want this industry to grow, that they did not want this industry to thrive, that they did not want this industry to provide the jobs and the wealth and the billions and billions of dollars of transfer payments for all Canadians to benefit from, for all Canadians to benefit from with jobs and social programs.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta: a great opportunity, a great place to live, and it's about that Alberta advantage. It's about that Alberta advantage of the most opportunity, the most competitive taxes, and the best social programs. That's exactly why we need Bill 12, the Royalty Guarantee Act, to provide the confidence for those who create jobs, those who create wealth, those who invest billions of dollars, certainly tens of millions of dollars, to make it happen.

I want to come back to the royalty review in 2007-2008, which was one of the reasons I decided to enter politics. I don't know

whether to call it, you know, the first of a thousand cuts. Certainly, I had the good fortune to knock on so many doors in the last campaign and see how resilient and how strong so many Albertans are. They're willing to travel to work, willing to do what it takes, willing to bear down. But it was a step back when I heard last week that for some of our natural gas companies the spot price for natural gas right now is actually negative, meaning they have to pay to take away their oil and gas, or their gas in this case. Mr. Speaker, there have been so many issues that have made it hard for this industry. This certainty is required. This certainty will not only create jobs, but it will protect what we have.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you a little bit more about Medicine Hat and some of the layers of burden that the past government put on them. At a time when things were a bit challenging, instead of doing something like a Royalty Guarantee Act, where we know that things aren't going to change for 10 years, the last government decided to make it tougher with that 20 per cent tax increase I talked about, with the carbon tax, with extra layers of regulation, with a 100-megatonne cap. And here are some of the effects. Knocking on doors it was absolutely alarming how many Cypress-Medicine Hatters were on their way to North Dakota, Texas, Wyoming, Oklahoma, even Argentina, even Iran because that's where the work was. It was alarming.

5:50

In the city of Medicine Hat our gas department used to return considerable profits to the good people of Medicine Hat. Unfortunately, now it's losing money, and a \$24 million dividend that used to assist in providing good public services is no longer available. Mr. Speaker, the mayor and the council people in Medicine Hat are having to find \$24 million of annual savings because they don't get this dividend anymore. That's comparable to Calgary or Edmonton having to find \$500 million in savings.

Mr. Speaker, the problems and the reverberation of our oil and gas industry not being strong are widely felt. That is why we need Bill 12. That is why we need to have the guarantee of royalty protection so these people can invest and create jobs.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about some other layers that have to be addressed. The federal government, under the Species at Risk Act, has an environmental protection order to protect sage grouse in our area. Everybody wants to protect the sage grouse. Everybody wants to make sure that they thrive, that industry thrives, and everyone has a chance to do well. But here's what's happened. A company called LGX ended up going into receivership; hundreds of families that used to work there affected. The city of Medicine Hat ended up suing the federal government for \$42 million because of this being placed.

People that care about the sage grouse are noticing that with the introduction of fox, with hardly any families out there, there are more coyotes. They're noticing that the sage grouse, the leks where they mate and dance, seem to be in areas where people used to live. They're hoping that this is the kind of thing, again, that rules and regulations and a government that cares about family and free enterprise in the oil and gas industry can have an opportunity to look at, to make sure that we work hand in hand better to protect our environment, to protect our species, and to make sure that all Alberta families have an opportunity to flourish, to do well, and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close with just simply that I very, very much support the Royalty Guarantee Act. I very much know that good, ethical, safe development of oil and gas is what Alberta has done best. I'm so pleased that southeastern Alberta and Medicine Hat has been a leader in that area since the '50s and '60s and very, very much wants to continue to do that. I know that this act will

provide the long-term certainty that investors need to invest their money, take some risk but at the same time create some jobs and pay some royalties so Alberta can continue to have the best social programs in all of Canada. I'm especially glad that this guarantee is a platform promise and demonstrates our commitment to stand up for all Albertans and create jobs.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other hon. members looking to speak to the bill?

**An Hon. Member:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Acting Speaker:** Not on this one. He was the second speaker. On the next speaker there would be 29(2)(a). This one would be 15 minutes for the initial debate time.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore standing.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always enjoy being able to rise in this House to speak to various pieces of legislation, especially Bill 12. You know, I have to say that it's been interesting listening to some of the speakers, especially the last one, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and, frankly, a lot of the members over on the government side. What I found interesting is some of the spin that we hear around things. There's some spin in Bill 12 that I'll address, but I think I should clarify why I'm talking about spin.

For example, we hear the government talking at length about the biggest mandate that they've had in the history of Alberta, you know, a 56 per cent mandate, that over a million people voted for them. The problem is that there are 3.3 million people in Alberta, which is less than 25 per cent, 23.9 per cent to be exact. It's always interesting to hear the spin.

We could talk about the corporate tax rate, that it was raised by 20 per cent. The last time I looked, 12 per cent up from 10 per cent is only 2 per cent. Again, it's all around spin. [interjections] I know that members are heckling away, and I know I have the floor right now, Mr. Speaker, so perhaps they might want to listen to some of the things I have to say.

We have spin in Bill 12. I'm looking at Bill 12 right now, and one of the things I'm a little bit concerned about is red tape. Here we are creating some structure around red tape, so I'm . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt. I just want to take a moment to remind the House that there will be ample opportunity to debate this matter. At the present time I'm actually having a little bit of trouble hearing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Please continue.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

Getting back to what I was mentioning around red tape, I mean, we've seen the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction have a mandate looking to cut red tape in the province of Alberta by one-third, with a bit of a one-in, one-out type of focus. Of course, I was very, very pleased to finally see the posting of the 17 regulations that were eliminated over a 21-day period. I was very excited to be able to see that. Of course, a lot of people don't quite understand why it was eliminated, how it could affect them, you know, but we'll work on that a little bit later.

When we talk about that mandate around red tape, you know, we've seen some bills that are bringing in red tape. So if we start to look at this, is there going to be a rush to try to eliminate red tape to keep up with the red tape that we have coming into the Assembly here right now? I'm a little bit concerned about that around this bill and several others.

Again, when I was talking a little bit about spin, I could even refer a little bit to Bill Hate, where you've talked about, you know, some of the biggest protections for GSAs, yet there are some loopholes that I could probably fly the space shuttle through from the backseat.

Here we are talking about guaranteeing over the next 10 years some of the rates, but this is a little bit misleading, Mr. Speaker. When I see things around whatever actions the government considers appropriate and consistent with legislation, that tells me that, well, if it's prudent and convenient, we're going to start changing things just on a bit of a whim, so that really doesn't actually provide certainty for investors when they're looking at these royalties.

You know, here we are. We're focused on trying to look at the rates that we're using. With probably, unfortunately, a bit of limited time, hopefully, I'll be able to get back to this later. I can get through a little bit of a history of where we're at in terms of our royalties. Again, I'm a little bit concerned that there's going to be a bit of a rush to get through some of this stuff, and then we'll have to try to make up for it going forward.

So I'm really hoping that the government isn't going down yet another path where they're selling Albertans a bill of goods that really isn't going to be in their best interests. I'm really concerned that Bill 12 happens to be one of those bills of goods that really isn't going to be in their best interests. At the end of the day, royalties belong to Albertans. They should be getting a good, fair price for them, making sure that we take that money and are able to invest it back into Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member for a second time, but seeing that it is 6 p.m., the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]







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