



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 8, 2019

Day 24

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 8, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Ivy Mills. We would invite all members of the Assembly to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, it is my absolute honour and pleasure to introduce to all of you this fine afternoon – from the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods please welcome l'école Frère Antoine Catholic school.

Hon. members, I know that many of you will be aware that from time to time I mention the hundreds and hundreds of people following along at home. Today it's my absolute pleasure to introduce to you virtually the staff and grade 6 students, some 500 of them, joining us live online from the C.W. Perry middle school in Airdrie. Thank you very much for tuning in.

Hon. members, as many of you are aware, over this past summer I put out a call to Albertans to contact my office if they would be willing to lead the Assembly in the singing of our national anthem. This afternoon I was so pleased to welcome our very first anthem singer this sitting, a 13-year-old from Morinville public school – she's a student there – Ms Ivy Mills. She is accompanied by her parents, Kimberley and Warrant Officer Nathaniel Mills. Singing is a huge part of Ivy's life. She has a keen interest in politics. It will only be a few years now until she has my job. Having served as the school president, she has sung at various talent shows, school assemblies, events, Remembrance Day ceremonies. Hon. members, please join me in thanking Ivy for singing for us today.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon: it's my absolute honour and pleasure to introduce the wife of the Minister of Indigenous Relations, Rose Wilson; their daughter June Boyda; and granddaughters Ariana and Megan Boyda. Welcome.

Also, guests of the Minister of Indigenous Relations: they will be joining us as they arrive here this afternoon, but I wanted to take the opportunity and welcome Grand Chief Arthur Noskey, Chief William Morin, Stephen Buffalo, Calvin Helin, and Herb Lehr to the Assembly as they arrive a little bit later.

Also, it's my pleasure to introduce to all members of the Assembly guests of the Minister of Advanced Education: Jon Mastel, Jon Bilodeau, and Emmanuel Barker.

Statement by the Speaker

Members' Statements Rotation

The Speaker: Hon. members, before Members' Statements begins, I would like to remind all members that the amendments to the standing orders that were approved by the Assembly with the passage of Government Motion 30 this morning include an amendment regarding members' statements. As members are aware, there will now be the opportunity to make an additional three members' statements each sitting day for a total of nine members' statements each day. The duration of each statement continues to be a maximum of two minutes.

My office will provide you all with a document from the House leaders confirming the agreement on the new Members' Statements rotation to reflect this change, which I will table later today at the appropriate time in the daily Routine. An updated projected sitting days calendar will be e-mailed to all members later today, which includes the new Members' Statements rotation. For members' information, this afternoon private members of the government caucus will be entitled to six members' statements, and members of the Official Opposition will be entitled to three members' statements.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a statement to make.

Health Care System

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last three months I've had the opportunity to speak with health care workers across Alberta, and wherever I go – Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Calgary, or Lethbridge – I've heard the same thing: resources are stretched thin, and workers are afraid.

What are they afraid of? This government and their plans for our health care system. Nurses, paramedics, lab technicians, ER doctors, health care aides: they're all deeply concerned about how the UCP's plan to introduce more American-style health care while cutting funding for key supports is going to affect their ability to do their jobs and provide quality patient care. Workers have told me how their departments and facilities are already reducing staff on shift and leaving positions unfilled as they anticipate cuts because when demand is rising and funding remains the same, that is a cut. They've told me how when staff call in sick, their shifts go uncovered, how they're burning out and morale is dropping as they're forced to make painful decisions about which patient's care is most urgent from one moment to the next.

This, Mr. Speaker, is the legacy of years of Conservative tinkering with and underinvestment in health services. Our government reversed plans for further cuts and maintained stable, predictable funding while keeping a reasonable cap on growth. As a result, as columnist Keith Gerein noted, "Alberta's health system... enjoyed one of its most uninterrupted periods of stability." We were starting to turn the corner after years of ideologically driven chaos, uncertainty, and roller coaster funding from Conservatives. The UCP seems intent on driving us right back, suggesting front-line workers are lazy, entitled, and overpaid while breaking their contracts and threatening to roll back their salaries, making short-sighted cuts to funding for preventative supports and cancelling badly needed infrastructure without consultation.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve better than simply resurrecting tired plans for American-style health care that have been rejected time and again, and all of my colleagues with the Alberta NDP are committed to standing by workers in our health care system to fight for that better.

Yom Kippur

Ms Issik: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have the opportunity to rise before you to speak on one of the holiest days of the Jewish faith, Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is certainly one of the most culturally significant holidays of the Jewish faith. Many secular Jewish people attend synagogue on Yom Kippur, even those who do not observe other religious holidays.

Despite being a day of rest, Yom Kippur is equally a day of atonement and sacrifice. Although this is one of the holiest days in the Jewish religion, it is not a time for celebration but a time for restraint and repentance. Yom Kippur imposes necessary restrictions on practitioners which include refraining from eating or drinking, refusing to wear leather shoes, avoiding bathing or washing oneself, not anointing self with one's fragrances or perfumes, and abstaining from marital relations. In fact, when the Hebrew name Yom Kippur is translated into English, it reveals the true purpose of this observance as a day of atonement.

1:40

Yom Kippur marks the conclusion of the 10 High Holy Days of Judaism, which commence with the observance of Rosh Hashanah. According to tradition God inscribes each person's fate for the coming year in a book titled the Book of Life, on Rosh Hashanah. However, this verdict is not finally sealed until the advent of Yom Kippur. Throughout the High Holy Days between, members of the Jewish faithful are given the chance to repent and to amend their divine or mortal wrongdoings, to seek redemption in the eyes of God. These High Holy Days are the only time of the year that many secular Jewish people will choose to attend synagogue, which is a testament to their importance.

For Jewish people within Alberta and across the world today is a time for rest, prayer, fasting, and atonement. In honour of this holy day our administration would like to extend our best wishes to everyone observing Yom Kippur. [Remarks in Hebrew]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie would like to make a statement.

Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Women make up just over 50 per cent of the population, and they currently represent the highest enrolment in Canadian universities. However, women are underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, also known as STEM. One way to increase female enrolment in STEM studies is to encourage the women who are currently employed in the field to mentor and inspire young women like my daughter Isabelle to follow in their footsteps. Scholarships for women in these areas have also been proven to be effective in increasing interest in enrolment, but representation for women in engineering and computer science remains very low.

While low enrolment for women in STEM is a concern, so is the career path after graduation as only one-third of STEM graduates employed currently are women. To our government those numbers are unacceptable. The issue of female graduates not getting hired into the STEM workforce, although qualified for these roles, perpetuates the cycle of low engagement for women in STEM. This

leaves women that have STEM degrees to pursue careers in jobs which they are often overqualified for. These women work in jobs irrelevant to their specialty and many times lower paying.

Mr. Speaker, October is Women's History Month in Canada, and historically women have been underrepresented in STEM-related fields. It is time to change that. I am proud to say that our government, along with the Ontario provincial government, in July committed to enhance opportunities for women in STEM. Together we can encourage women to excel in STEM careers and get women working in the fields for which they have been previously overlooked.

Our government continues to work to grow Alberta's economy. As our economy expands, we have an opportunity to provide rewarding STEM career paths to more women. We will continue encouraging more women and girls to be involved in STEM fields and give them the support they need to be successful and secure meaningful employment within the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

This month I encourage all members to support women and girls in STEM and to support our government's initiative to encourage women in these critical areas of study. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Queue-jumping, backroom deals, pay-to-play: these terms evoke a visceral reaction because Albertans hate unfairness. We believe in level playing fields. The UCP is trying to tell us that everyone is in the same position, having to wait for the budget, but that isn't the case. First graders who need supports wait, police trying to maintain service levels wait, and diversification has to wait. These are the Albertans the UCP has told to wait. "Just wait," they say. They haven't decided yet if these Albertans are worth investing in.

Meanwhile they had \$4.5 billion to give away to profitable corporations immediately. The Walmarts of the world didn't have to wait. They didn't need to get in line with everyone else. The UCP got them their money right away, and they sent it straight out of the country. What's worse, not one job was created. So while rich friends and insiders already got their 4 and a half billion dollar gift months ago, everyone else has to wait. Schoolchildren have to wait, first responders have wait, and diversification has to wait. We wait to see who is deemed unworthy, which Albertans will pay the price for the UCP's gift to already profitable corporations.

But it didn't have to be this way. This is a result of a deliberate choice, a choice by the UCP to put the Walmarts of the world ahead of everyone else. If corporations were made to wait, the UCP would have been forced to explain their choices. So they got to go first while Albertans continue to wait. That doesn't sound like a level playing field to me.

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

Federal Energy Policies

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is under siege. Radical interest groups continue to work against Alberta's hard-working families in an effort to land-lock our resources. Environmentalists, funded with millions of dollars by foreign interest groups, continue to protest and block pipeline development with allies in the NDP government in British Columbia. But it doesn't end there. The federal Liberal government, under Justin Trudeau, has done nothing but aid in this assault.

To put this into perspective, I would like to quote the MP for Lakeland, Shannon Stubbs, in her response to Justin Trudeau's comments at a town hall: when Justin Trudeau "said that he wants to phase out the oil sands . . . Canadians should believe him." I couldn't agree more. Liberal governments have always targeted our energy industry and used that money to buy votes in eastern Canada. This election is no different. Regardless of all of this, Alberta continues to contribute greatly to our Confederation. We continue to support other provinces because we believe that all Canadians should prosper. The east continues to take billions of dollars from our province while supporting a government that has worked against us.

We need strong leadership in Ottawa that will fight for Alberta's interests, for our prosperity because a strong Alberta makes a strong Canada. We need a federal government that doesn't impose harmful policies like the tanker ban and a government that fights to expand access to markets so we can get fair value for our resources, the resources that all Canadians benefit from. We need a federal government that doesn't collapse under the pressure of radical interest groups and fake outrage culture, a government that is working for all Canadians, not just the ones that will vote for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a statement.

Indigenous Relations

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back to the Legislature, everyone. I want you to acknowledge the chiefs and leaders of the Métis community who have joined us here today and also my niece Isabel Feehan, who is with her class from l'école Frère Antoine. I begin by acknowledging that we're here on Treaty 6 land and the home of the Métis people.

Recently, while reviewing the Ministry of Indigenous Relations website, I discovered that the document Alberta's path to reconciliation, dated February 2019, has been removed. Given that this government has previously abandoned treaty land acknowledgements as a consistent practice and that this government abandoned funding for the indigenous climate leadership program, which had been accessed by all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements, I was concerned that this government was intent on abandoning reconciliation as well.

I'd like to take a minute to highlight some of the programs that were identified in the removed document so that I can encourage the government not to abandon them. One removed section was the piece about including indigenous perspectives and concerns in government policy and practices. This includes reflecting indigenous contributions and history, including residential schools and the '60s scoop. I encourage the government not to abandon this. This section also included monies for clean water on First Nations, and I encourage the government not to abandon this.

Other sections include funding for women's shelters on reserves, funding for native friendship centres, framework agreements for treaties 7 and 8 and with the Métis Nation of Alberta, co-operative management agreements for new protected areas in Alberta such as the Castle parks, the establishment of an Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel, the creation of Indigenous Tourism Alberta, the inclusion of ceremonial spaces in courthouses in Red Earth Creek and Fort Vermilion, a program for the indigenous-owned and -operated housing in urban centres, and the training of 27,000 public service employees in indigenous history, traditions, and knowledge.

These are, of course, only a small sample of the hundreds of improved programs and services for indigenous people put in place

by the NDP government, and I encourage this government not to abandon these programs and the indigenous people of this province.

1:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we get to your favourite part of the day, I'd just like to take a very brief moment and acknowledge that we have eight new pages joining us here in the Assembly today. You may see a few additional pages as they'll take the next couple of days to mentor some of the new pages, so I trust that you will invite them to the Assembly and treat them with the respect that each and every one of them deserves.

With that said, we are at Oral Question Period.

Oral Question Period

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

Corporate Taxes and the Provincial Fiscal Position

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back, everybody.

The Premier claimed that his \$4.5 billion gift to big corporations would create jobs. Turns out that was all talk. Last month ATB Financial cut its GDP growth projections by half: construction down, consumer spending down, capital investment down. To the Premier: won't you just admit that your plan is not about creating jobs; it is about starving the budget and making regular Albertans pay for it?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, our plan is the one that was endorsed by the largest number of voters in Alberta history. That plan was the one rejected as the first and only one-term government in Alberta history. According to Professor Leach, a former adviser to the Premier, the job-creation tax cut is "good economic policy." According to Professor Dahlby cutting the tax "is a smart move that will prove highly beneficial to Alberta's economy, including employment prospects, over the next decade." We're not even one-quarter of the way towards delivering that job-creating tax cut. We're going to keep our word with Albertans.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ATB also reports that there is actually one thing that is up in Alberta under the Premier's big corporate handout: unemployment. Thirteen thousand jobs had been lost at the very time this Premier was promising Albertans to create new ones. Albertans were promised jobs by this Premier now, not 10 years from now. They shouldn't have to wait. When will the Premier admit that his plan was only ever about lining the pockets of wealthy shareholders?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder that with antibusiness, class-warfare, socialist rhetoric like that the NDP drove tens of billions of dollars of business investment out of this province and with it created a jobs crisis unprecedented since the 1930s? The reality is this: it's going to take us a long time to undo the damage of the NDP. But there's good news happening. Two weeks ago the largest investment announcement in Alberta history, \$16 billion from Telus that will create 5,000 jobs, a billion and a half dollar cogen facility from Suncor that will create hundreds of jobs, and many more such announcements on the . . .

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows that Telus actually made that announcement about 12 months earlier as well, but nonetheless the Premier does need to stop pretending. Manufacturing is down. Building permits are down. Small business

confidence, down. ATB Financial says the economy is, I quote, stuck. To the Premier. Your plan to take things from regular Albertans and give buckets of money to big corporations just isn't working. Why won't you stop picking on Albertans, go back to the drawing board, and come up with a real plan to create the jobs that are needed today not a decade from now?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that she continues to mislead Albertans about the revenue . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mr. Kenney: . . . implications of the job-creation tax cut. It's not even a quarter of what she is suggesting, all of it embedded in our platform of commitments. Mr. Speaker, here's the reality. The NDP raised taxes on employers, and revenues went down from the business tax. Why? Because they scared billions of dollars of investment out of this province. They drove us into the jobs crisis. It'll take us some time to undo the damage imposed on our economy by the failure of socialist economics.

The Speaker: Point of order is noted.

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

Energy Policies and Job Creation

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Energy minister said she was, quote, disappointed that this Premier's corporate handout wasn't creating jobs in oil and gas. It's clear these companies aren't using a single dollar of that gift to invest in Alberta or, more importantly, to hire more Albertans. Like the Energy minister, I too am disappointed. Unlike her, I'm not at all surprised. To the Premier. While your minister is moping, 13,000 people have lost their jobs in oil and gas. Why won't you scrap this failed experiment?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as the opposition leader knows and as was confirmed for me by major global investors in New York three weeks ago, one of the primary reasons for a continued lack of investment in this province is the lack of pipelines, driven by her friend and ally Justin Trudeau and her NDP partners in Ottawa. October 21 will be very important for the economic future of Alberta, so let me ask the leader of the NDP: who is she voting for in that election, her antipipeline ally Justin Trudeau or her antipipeline leader Jagmeet Singh?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm focused on Alberta, and I suggest the Premier ought to be, too.

Now, the Energy minister aptly described the Premier's corporate handout as a windfall for these companies, and then she went on to say that she's not concerned that oil and gas companies still aren't creating jobs or investing. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned, and Albertans are concerned. As the minister sits on her hands, 13,000 people have lost their jobs in the last two months in the oil and gas sector. So to the Premier: does your minister's indifference to creating jobs cause you concern, and if not, why not?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the single greatest barrier to future economic and job growth in this province is federal policies that land-lock our energy, pin down and eventually kill our energy industry, both of which are the policies of the federal Liberal Party and the federal NDP. So when the opposition leader says she's standing up for Albertans, why doesn't she rise in her place and

stand up for Albertans by denouncing the plans of the Liberals and the NDP to land-lock and kill Alberta's energy industry?

Ms Notley: The other thing we've learned, Mr. Speaker, from the Premier is that yelling a lot clearly doesn't create jobs. We've actually lost jobs. Things are absolutely no better in the oil field. Oil drilling is down by over a third. Companies like Cenovus are scaling back investment, and RBC securities projects a cut to rig activity and well counts this year and next year. In short, there is certainly no corporate windfall for the actual workers in the oil patch. Job after job is being lost. To the Premier: when will you admit that you have a job, not somebody else who is not doing a job but you, and then do it?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we have been acting at lightning speed to recreate investor confidence in this province with the boldest moves on the job-creation tax cut, the red tape reduction action plan, and so much more. Fundamentally, to bring investment and jobs back to the energy sector requires market access, pipelines, energy corridors, which is why we need a change of government on October 21. Now, when asked who she's supporting on that day, she said that she wouldn't support the NDP because they've thrown workers under the bus, and then she corrected herself, saying that that wasn't quite right. So is it true, then, that she'll be supporting the Leap Manifesto, the keep-it-in-the-ground, the shut-down-Alberta strategy of the NDP?

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Corporate Taxes and the Provincial Fiscal Policies

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is working at lightning speed to distract from his failure to do a job. Let's recap: no GDP boost, no jobs, no new investment in oil and gas. Meanwhile Albertans are bracing for big cuts to services that they rely on while they pay more: more in insurance, more in tuition, more in school fees, and now more in child care. Premier, why won't you admit that your gift to your wealthy friends is only going to hurt regular Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: We continue to hear, Mr. Speaker, the politics of resentment, the class-warfare, soak-the-job-creators rhetoric from the NDP that helped to drive this province into an unprecedented recession, from which we are still fighting to recover. Does the NDP leader really believe that the recipe for job and economic growth is to continue raising taxes on businesses? Tax hikes actually reduced revenues. Will she ever have the honesty to stand up and admit that her tax hike on employers reduced government revenues?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will do is say that the Premier's handout to corporations is hurting Albertans, including seniors, in the quality of their care. Just yesterday one of those great job creators, which I'm sure – I'm sure – benefited from the corporate tax cut, turned around and handed out 50 pink slips to nurses. They told them they could then have their jobs back if they took an \$8-an-hour pay cut. Our parents and our loved ones are cared for by these 50 women. How does the Premier explain to them that they should be grateful for a corporate tax cut to the bosses who just fired them?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the fiscal situation of the province, we're contending with what Dr. Janice MacKinnon, former NDP finance minister, characterized as a fiscal crisis. The

NDP drove this province into a sea of red ink, of debt, from \$13 billion to \$60 billion of debt. They left us on track for over \$100 billion in debt. [interjection] Oh, I hear the most unsuccessful, the most failed finance minister in Alberta history heckling, Mr. Speaker. There's a reason he's heckling. Albertans fired him and his government for driving us toward \$100 billion in debt, from which we must recover.

Ms Notley: The crisis, Mr. Speaker, has been created by the \$4.5 billion tax gift to big corporations. Do you know who's paying for it? Do you know who's paying for it? It's kids: classrooms with over 40 students, kids learning in the hallway, support staff already kicked to the curb, parents fundraising for lunch programs, and of course a curriculum from the 1980s. I can see why the Premier is ashamed to call our school system public. To the Premier: why is this government more interested in boosting foreign shareholder dividends than protecting the education of our kids?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the reason why this government has been left with the challenging task of bringing balance back to our finances is because the NDP was the most irresponsible government in handling our province's finances in our history. They left us on track to spending \$4 billion a year in interest payments on the debt to enrich bankers and bondholders instead of supporting schools, hospitals, and public services. We will not allow the NDP deficit and debt to jeopardize the future of public services in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising with a question.

Vegreville Century Park Supportive Living Facility

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, last year the previous Minister of Health directed AHS to withhold consent for major staffing changes at the Optima Living Century Park facility in Vegreville until such time as the operator had corrected several serious issues in their standard of care. I and many other Albertans were shocked to learn this week that more than 50 employees working at that facility have now been laid off. Can the current Minister of Health tell this House if this facility is delivering care to his satisfaction and why the staff who endured through those terrible working conditions now find themselves out of work?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health is rising.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I share the concern that residents get the care that they need. That's my priority. I'm watching the situation closely, and I'm assured that there will be no interruption in care. Unlike the NDP, I don't believe in manipulating contracts for political purposes. Continuing care for decades has been publicly funded but delivered through a mix of public, not-for-profit, and, yes, private partners. The NDP just can't accept that because they can't handle the fact that there is any private partner in the system. I believe in making decisions which are based on the best interests of patients, not ideology.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister does believe in legislating to void contracts with workers.

Now, given that Optima Living has laid off these staff in Vegreville in order to replace them with out-of-province workers and the company has said that this heartless move, quote, offers the prospect of greater return to our shareholders, end quote, and as our

leader has already established, this government cares more, apparently, about those shareholders and protecting corporate interests than hard-working Albertans, to the minister: will you admit that you have no intention of sticking up for Alberta health care workers in Vegreville or, apparently, anywhere else in the province?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, there is a report that staff are being replaced with people from out of province, and it's simply false. It's sad that it's being perpetuated by the hon. member in this House. I understand from AHS that the new operator intends to hire most of the current staff. I also understand from AHS that there are vacancies in Vegreville and area, so there should be jobs for most or all of the staff. I'm not going to take lectures from the NDP about continuing care. They left us with a system where 16 per cent of our hospital beds are occupied by patients waiting for continuing care, and now we as a government have to fix it.

Mr. Shepherd: Now, Mr. Speaker, given that the layoff of these Vegreville staff is raising concerns of further American-style health care in this province and given that while Optima says that the staff that have been laid off can reapply, it is expected that they will be asked to take a pay cut of up to \$10 an hour – this is not right, but it is more of what we've seen from this government – to this minister: would you admit that, much like with your 4-and-a-half-billion-dollar giveaway to big corporations, you're prioritizing corporate profits over protecting workers and over the quality of patient care?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, AHS and my department are monitoring the transition closely to ensure that all residents are given the care that they need. That's my priority, not grandstanding about private providers in the system. The NDP ignored the real issues in the system for four years. They imposed their bias against private providers from one area to the other, from continuing care to labs to laundry. Our government has campaigned on the real issues in health care, starting with improving access to the system, including continuing care. That's my priority as minister.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock is rising with a question.

Animal Rights Activist Protests at Farms

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, September 2, a group of protestors invaded the privacy and interrupted the operations of a turkey farm near Fort Macleod in southern Alberta. The protestors would not leave and demanded a tour of the facility. In the end the farmer was forced to co-operate with the protestors, even to the point of giving them five turkeys. To the Minister of Justice: what is this government doing to protect farm families from these interruptions on their private property?

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

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this question. It was my honour last week, with the Premier and the minister of agriculture, to announce that we're going to be cracking down on illegal protestors that trespass on our farmers. This party on the government side here clearly stands with our farmers. We're not giving away five turkeys; we're sending a clear signal to environmental extremists that you do not trespass on farm property in Alberta. Our farmers are off limits. The NDP have been silent on this. We want to know: do they stand with farmers in Alberta?

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that this turkey farm situation is not an isolated incident, with the Excelsior hog farm in B.C. having over 200 protestors interrupt operations on April 28 and hog farms in Ontario broken into and stolen from in March 2018, and these actions constitute crimes such as break and enter, criminal mischief, and theft, to name a few, to the same minister: how will this government be handling these offenders, and will this government consider imposing stricter punishments for these acts of eco-terrorism to protect our farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Yes, we will. Individuals that trespass on property will be facing up to \$25,000 in fines with the bill that we're going to be bringing forward this session. In addition to that, the organizations that help facilitate these crimes will face fines of up to \$200,000. Individuals also will face up to six months in jail. Our side of the Legislature is clear. We're standing with our farming communities. We're standing up for property rights. Why is the NDP so silent on this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the safety and well-being of our farmers, farms, and livestock should be a top priority of this government and given that these offences not only harm the farmers but they also compromise the integrity of the affected livestock, to the minister of agriculture: what is the government doing to look out for the safety and well-being of our farms, farmers, and livestock?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we are committed to amending the Animal Health Act and introducing fines of up to \$15,000 for a first offence, \$30,000 for a second offence, and actually a year of jail time. The announcement that we were referencing earlier was a great announcement that happened outside of Lethbridge. Actually, it was the same day that we had a seven-years-in-the-making Cavendish announcement: hundreds of millions of dollars, hundreds of jobs that are actually coming to the Lethbridge area. It was actually great to be joined by the MLA for Lethbridge-East. It was unfortunate and noticed that the Member for Lethbridge-West was not there, but I'm assuming she was on her leadership tour. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, order.

2:10

Education Funding

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, students have been back to school for over a month now, many in overcrowded classrooms without enough support. Still, the UCP government won't make kids a priority. What is their priority? A \$4.5 billion giveaway to highly profitable corporations. That's right. The Premier, the Finance minister, and even the Education minister couldn't rush fast enough to push out a massive payday to their big business friends, and now kids are paying the price. How can the minister come back to this place without a budget and say that she's doing her job?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education has risen.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government remains committed to providing a world-class, high-quality education for all Alberta students. We owe it to parents and to children to get better outcomes for the money that is being spent on education. As we make funding decisions, we will be

looking through the lens of what is best for our children and what will actually improve student learning.

Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Well, while this minister waits, Mr. Speaker, there are 45 kids in a grade 5 French immersion class in a Calgary Catholic school. Given that the UCP government has chosen to hand out \$4.5 billion to already highly profitable corporations, what does the minister have to say to students, teachers, parents dealing with this overcrowding throughout Alberta schools because this minister chooses to wear a pin that says one thing but her actions clearly say that corporations come first?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Given that the previous . . .

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

Member LaGrange: Given that the previous government brought their budget in on October 22 when they were elected, as we await our budget, which will come forward in a very few short weeks, school divisions are in the best position to comment on their individual budgets. This is just another example of the NDP's fear tactics. They were wrong on enrolment growth, they were wrong on nutrition, and they're wrong again. We're going to bring in a great budget.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the point of order is noted at approximately 2:13.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, giving random talking points and telling people to wait until Christmas before they actually find out how much money they get from their government is wrong. Given that the UCP blew a \$4.5 billion hole in their budget with corporate giveaways and given that this experiment hasn't resulted in a single new job but it has resulted in overcrowded classrooms, teachers getting laid off, longer bus rides, and kids with special needs having to pay the price for this minister's backwards priorities, why is the minister continuing to choose to put corporations over kids?

The Speaker: Hon. members, I might just caution all members that the use of preambles after question 4 isn't allowed.

The hon. Minister of Education has the call.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, we owe it to parents of children to get better outcomes for the money that we're spending. Alberta spends more on its education system than most provinces, but the results just aren't there. Again, I say this is just another example of your smear and fear. We are continuing to put children first. I am continuing to put children first and doing what's important and making things right for education.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen with a question.

Municipal Funding

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the recent AUMA convention the Minister of Municipal Affairs warned local leaders of deep cuts to MSI and other provincial grants for local government in the budget. As one councillor put it, quote, it's not going to be pretty. End quote. That's what our municipalities get,

but big corporations get a \$4.5 billion gift from this Premier. To the minister: just how much money are you cutting from municipalities?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I just had to rise in response to remark on the phenomenal chutzpah of that member having the temerity to ask a question about spending restraint, all of it required to clean up the huge fiscal mess, the enormous hole that he dug this province into, racking up the biggest per capita deficit in the country, moving Alberta's debt from \$13 billion to \$60 billion, headed to \$100 billion. Every single dime of spending restraint by this government is ultimately the responsibility of that member and his gross fiscal irresponsibility.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My parents told me to stand up to bullies, and I will.

Given that recommendation 15 in the Premier's blue-ribbon panel report calls for the provincial government to "require municipalities to share more in the costs of major projects" and given that I don't see corporations paying their share for anything and instead are getting a handout from this Premier, to the minister: how high will municipal taxes have to be hiked to complete badly needed infrastructure projects?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the record of that member on corporate taxes was to drive down by billions of dollars the corporate tax revenues that were collected. How did he do it? He did it by raising the tax rates, by . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will have order. We heard the question; we'll hear the answer.

Mr. Kenney: He did it, Mr. Speaker, by giving effect to exactly the kind of antibusiness, job-killing rhetoric that he has just articulated all over again.

Mr. Speaker, I've met with mayors all across the province. They understand that we're all in this together. We are Team Alberta. Together we need to clean up the fiscal mess left behind by that member and his failed socialist policies.

Member Ceci: You know, corporations aren't all in this together. They're getting a \$4.5 billion gift from that Premier over there, Mr. Speaker.

Given that municipalities were close to signing a long-term financial deal with us when we were in government, Mr. Speaker, and given that this Premier rushed out to cut a deal with big corporations, to the minister: have you now cancelled discussions on a long-term financial deal with municipalities because of your corporate handout?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, they were close to signing an agreement. After four years they were just that close.

But you know why they didn't get a chance to keep running the clock? Because Albertans fired them. They fired them in part because they recognized that the record of that member was the record of the worst Finance minister in Alberta history. He drove down business tax revenues. His policies, his tax hikes killed tens of thousands of jobs. I can tell you that I've met with our mayors and many of our councillors, Mr. Speaker. They understand it. They understand that we cannot keep kicking the can down the road, that we have to pay our bills. We can't live off our credit card. We've got to make up for the NDP fiscal mess.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East has a question.

Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The heritage savings trust fund was meant to save for the future, to strengthen or diversify the economy, and to improve the quality of life of Albertans. Returns from this fund are intended to fund valuable programs and services, including health care, education, and research. Unfortunately, lack of contributions and consistent withdrawals have stifled the growth of the fund. To the Minister of Finance: is there a plan to resume investing in this fund so we can be proud of what we are passing on to future Albertans?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The best thing we can do for the next generation is to deliver a debt-free province. This government will be rolling out a budget that will have a clear fiscal path to balance the budget within our first term, and that is the best thing we can do for the next generation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that we now have a large amount of debt that must be dealt with, which was recklessly accumulated by the previous NDP government, and given that it is prudent to invest only so long as the return on your investment exceeds the cost of your debt, can the minister please inform the Assembly on the performance of the heritage trust fund in recent years and also comment on the cost of carrying our current debt?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The heritage fund is contributing positively to our province's future and last year earned an 8 per cent return. Our debt at the end of last year, however, was \$60 billion, caused by the excessive spending of the members opposite. Last year Alberta spent \$1.9 billion in debt-service costs. That's \$5 million a day. Continuing down this path is unsustainable. Our government will chart a new course, a course of sound, responsible fiscal management.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that Alberta is a province and part of the federation of Canada and that Norway has a different capacity as it is a country and given that the Alberta heritage savings trust fund is approximately \$18 billion while Norway's oil fund now has over a trillion dollars in assets, can the minister explain for the benefit of Albertans why it is that Alberta is unable to save at the same rate as Norway despite our natural resources and the fact that we are a larger country? [interjection]

2:20

The Speaker: Order.
The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, again, thank you to the member for the question. The key difference between Alberta and Norway is that Albertans contribute to a larger federation. In fact, Alberta's net contribution to the federal treasury in the last decade was \$210 billion. Now, we're proud to be the economic engine of the nation, but our federal government absolutely has to

get their act together to improve energy market access for this province and the nation if we're going to continue to generate the wealth and make the contributions that we have to the federation as well as to the next generation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Rural Crime Prevention and Policing

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've recently seen documents showing that this UCP government is considering cuts to rural police funding of up to 70 per cent. This is pretty hypocritical from a government that campaigned on being tough on rural crime. But now it seems that priorities have changed. Big corporations get a massive handout, and the communities are left to fend for themselves. To the Minister of Justice: can you please explain when exactly your government decided that fighting crime was no longer a priority?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. We are dedicated to more funding for police officers. I've had the opportunity over the last month to meet with over 1,000 Albertans, all the way up from Fairview to Drayton Valley, all the way down to Coaldale and Cheadle. We have been very, very clear. We are going to fully implement our campaign commitments to address rural crime. Also, I'd like to ask the other member over here: why are they against 500 new police officers for rural Alberta? Why are they against 500 police officers? We need a clear answer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that it seems this government will download the cost of rural policing onto taxpayers at a cost of up to \$400 a year and given that we know that their \$4.5 billion giveaway has not created jobs for hard-working Albertans, to the minister: how exactly are Albertans living in rural communities supposed to be able to afford to pay for the police he was supposed to give to make their rural communities safe?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we have been crystal clear in our commitment to have more policing. We committed to having a discussion, in consultation with rural municipalities, around police costing. I'd like to share with the hon. member what justice right now is like in rural Alberta. I had an individual. He'd been broken into four times in the last three months, stopped reporting the incidents. I've met in every single town hall that I go to people that have stopped reporting the crimes. We're in a crisis mode right now in rural Alberta. We don't need more politics. We need support for 500 more police officers.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, rural Albertans want action, not talk. Given that our government invested \$10 million to combat rural crime and that the RCMP credited this investment with an average 9 per cent drop in rural crime and given that the UCP voted against this strategy, to the minister: can you please explain to Albertans why there's plenty of cash for big corporations but not a single dollar to keep our communities safe?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we said: more for policing. We're going to be investing more to address rural crime. The one thing that I'd like to highlight for this hon. member is that in going to every single one of these communities, that she did not visit, they said clearly in every single town hall that after calling for four years, asking for justice in Alberta, asking for their issues to be taken seriously, they finally have a Justice minister that's come out to talk

to them. We're taking their ideas forward. Jumbo Valley didn't happen by chance. It happened because this government is listening. More to come.

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

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry Final Report

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been 18 weeks since the release of the final report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. More than 2,380 people participated in the inquiry, with more than 270 survivors and family members sharing their stories in sessions, and hundreds more provided written or artistic statements to the inquiry. Has the Minister of Indigenous Relations read this report, and what is his reaction?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that question. This is a very important issue to me, and I have read the report in its entirety, along with our minister of culture. We're working together on this. It was an honour to represent the province at the closing ceremony of the final report into the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I can tell you that I have reviewed that report, and we're working on developing calls to justice. Our government is committed to moving towards true reconciliation. True reconciliation . . .

An Hon. Member: What does that mean?

Mr. Wilson: You'll see.

It will empower indigenous Albertans to take charge of their own destiny. We have and we will continue to engage with indigenous communities and leaders across Alberta.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the inquiry's report does include 231 calls for justice – and many of these are directed specifically at government or government agencies such as health care, education, and police – which of these calls for justice will the minister be prioritizing, and when will he present the plan for this House to implement?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, thank you for that question because this is such an important issue. I had the privilege of attending the Sisters in Spirit Day and accepting a red dress from the Awo Taan Healing Lodge. It's an important first step in working with key, on-the-ground services that help indigenous women. There are many practical calls to justice, and I'll be starting with the ones in section 15. It's the part that can be done immediately such as developing a knowledge and a base, speaking out against violence, and I encourage all Albertans to do their part in combating violence against all women.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the inquiry's report made prominent use of the word "genocide" to describe how colonial structures lead directly to increased rates of violence, death, and suicide in indigenous populations, does the minister

support the use of the word “genocide”? Minister, this is simply a yes or no question.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was grateful and honoured by the families and communities and organizations that participated during the inquiry. I met and I connected with several of the families who presented in Ottawa. I sat down with a woman who had lost her family, and she asked me what I would do. I told her that I would work on this, and I have started working on this. You’ve probably seen some of the events I’ve been attending along with a lot of our members here. We take this matter very seriously, and we’re going to continue to work on this. Myself and the minister of culture and status of women are working on it right now.

Choice in Education

Mr. Toor: Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Calgary-Falconridge parents are especially concerned about children’s education. Charter schools have proven a very successful model for improving student achievement and catering to individual students’ needs. Because there are none nearby, parents in my riding are willing to send their kids across town to gain access to charter schools. To the Minister of Education: can you please explain to this House how our government intends to protect choice in education, including the ability to access charter school education in Alberta?

Member LaGrange: Thank you, hon. member, for that question. Alberta has a very long and successful tradition of supporting school choice, and our government is committed to preserving and protecting educational choice. Our government is committed to introducing the choice in education act, which will affirm that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for her comments. Given that charter schools provide customized options to children with specific needs and learning styles and given that most parents in my riding cannot afford private options, especially when their children may have special needs, can the minister commit to allowing more charter schools in Calgary specifically to address the desires of parents in northeast Calgary?

Member LaGrange: Thank you again for that question. Charter schools play an important role in Alberta’s educational system by offering more choice to students and to their parents. When it was brought into force, the Education Act lifted the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in this province. Charter school applications will continue to be assessed using the same criteria. Need must be demonstrated by the community for a charter school to be considered, and we are looking at that for you.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that our government committed to restoring choice in education and given that our government maintains that parents are a child’s first teachers, not the government bureaucrats, can the minister please explain how our government is allowing parents to be involved in their children’s education?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the MLA for that question. When introduced, the choice in education act will propose that the preamble of the Education Act include recognition of section 26(3) of the universal declaration of human rights, which states that “parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.” Our government values the role parents play as the primary educator of their children and intends to protect that relationship. I heard it loud throughout the province.

Thank you.

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

Member for Calgary-East’s Committee Appointment

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta heritage savings trust fund manages more than \$18 billion worth of assets on behalf of Albertans. AIMCo provides the day-to-day management, and final responsibility for the fund sits with the Minister of Finance. The standing committee of the Legislature also provides oversight for the management of this money on behalf of Albertans. This House was asked to approve the Member for Calgary-East as a member of this committee. Does the Minister of Finance believe that this member is qualified for this role, and if so, why?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous to see that the NDP still has not learned the lesson that Albertans taught them back in April in that they do not accept the fear-and-smear politics that this opposition continues to do in this Chamber. The hon. member they refer to is a member in good standing in this Chamber and has every right to sit on a standing committee. It’s unfortunate that the opposition wants to use this in their time in question period, which is valuable, rather than focusing on issues that are important to Albertans. It’s ridiculous behaviour, and let me be clear: we will not be bullied by the NDP.

Ms Sweet: Given that the MLA for Calgary-East had his office raided by the RCMP just days before the spring election and given that the MLA has been linked to an ongoing voter fraud scandal involving the UCP leadership campaign of this current Premier, to the minister: are you aware that the Member for Calgary-East is currently facing an Election Commissioner investigation for bribery and forgery and a separate criminal investigation for fraud? If you are aware, why do you see it fit to put him in charge of the province’s trust fund?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, when that party was in power just a short while ago, some of the members, who may even sit in the benches right now – I don’t know – were accused of serious sexual allegations. Their leader at the time hid that from Albertans and protected those individuals rather than coming clean and making it clear to Albertans where those individuals stood. In fact, they hid it from them even during the election so that people could not make a decision inside their constituencies.

In regard to the Member for Calgary-East, his constituents spoke loud and clear. That makes him qualified to sit in this place, and he will sit on the standing committee as per the fact that they sent him here to serve.

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

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Government House Leader just said a few minutes ago that he thought this was below the decorum, it's amazing that he decided to bring that up.

Anyway, given that the investigation into fraud during the UCP leadership campaign is far from over and given that the Member for Calgary-East has refused to talk to the media or come clean about his role in this scandal, will the minister please commit today to keeping the MLA for Calgary-East away from the province's coffers, or does the corruption run so deep in the UCP that there's simply no one else that can sit on this committee?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, will the members across the way, will the leader of the NDP stand up and tell us which one of her members that are currently inside this House has been accused of serious sexual misconduct? Will she stand up and explain that once and for all instead of trying to play this game inside this Chamber? The opposition wants to make accusations about other people there but don't like it when it's thrown back at them. That's the point. It's disappointing to see the way that they act in their capacity as the Official Opposition. It's unbecoming of the Official Opposition. So stand up and tell us which one of you guys has been accused of sexual misconduct.

Tax Credit Programs

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, this summer Alberta businesses learned that the government had, without notice, frozen funding for the Alberta investor tax credit and the interactive digital media tax credit. This freeze came as a shock to many in the industry because they were helping Alberta businesses grow and create jobs here in Alberta. Now the government has pulled the rug out from under many businesses in the tech sector just as they were starting to gain momentum. To the minister of economic development and trade: are these programs being cut to help pay for your government's massive \$4.5 billion corporate giveaway? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development and trade.

Ms Fir: Thank you for the question. You know, Mr. Speaker, prior to the NDP bringing in these tax credits, Alberta competed. In fact, we didn't just compete; we thrived. But then the NDP increased taxes on business, they brought in the carbon tax, they drove investment out of Alberta, and then they had to bring in these tax credits. All tax credits are under review as we're going to be heading into a challenging budget. We are reviewing the Alberta investor tax credit along with all tax credits to ensure they align with our bold vision for renewing Alberta's economy.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, given that this minister is supposed to be responsible for supporting Alberta job creators and given that the tax credit programs introduced by our government were generating an economic return for our province, helping companies grow in scale and compete, and given that other provinces have similar tax credits, which have helped them diversify their economies, to the minister: will you apologize to the tech companies for leaving them in the lurch and forcing them out of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development and trade.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We take no lessons in growing the economy from the party that increased taxes on job creators and, again, drove investment out of our province, all the while putting

us on track for \$100 billion in debt. The previous government was fiscally irresponsible and left tens of billions of dollars for future generations to pay back. Our government will not leave a bill for our children and grandchildren. We will create the best microeconomic conditions for businesses to thrive.

Mr. Bilous: Given that your microeconomic conditions have created zero jobs, given that I met with the minister of economic development and trade and urged her to reinstate these programs but she didn't budge, and given that all signs of economic growth in this province have completely stalled, to the minister: We need these tax credit programs to help spur investment and put Albertans to work. Don't take my word for it; take the businesses'. Will you stand up today in this House and commit to reinstating these tax credits, and if not, why not?

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, our government's first priority is getting Albertans back to work and renewing Alberta's economy. We have already taken measures to ensure that Alberta is the best place in Canada to invest or start a business with our introduction of the job-creation tax cut, which gives Alberta the lowest tax rate on job creators in Canada and will eventually give Alberta a lower corporate tax rate than 44 U.S. states. [interjections] I understand that the members opposite are still bitter that Albertans fired them, but trying to drown out what we have to say with their jeers and heckling is not going to work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has risen with a question.

Natural Gas Industry Competitiveness

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Leduc-Beaumont has a very young and fast-growing population that relies on our oil and gas sector for employment and opportunity as much as anywhere else in the province. A number of natural gas companies have been doing business in my constituency for years through boom-and-bust cycles of the energy economy and through the highs and lows of volatile pricing. To the minister: how do you plan to address the volatile prices in Alberta in order to create certainty for investors and producers?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has been working collaboratively with the industry to find solutions that will address the systematic issues facing our natural gas sector. Unlike the previous government, that ignored this important sector, our government is going to stand up and represent natural gas producers. This fall the Canada Energy Regulator approved TC Energy to revise its natural gas storage protocol, which is going to allow more gas into storage, will help with balance in the system, and deal with volatile prices on AECO.

Mr. Rutherford: Natural gas royalties can be one of the largest sources of royalty revenue for the government of Alberta, but given that in order for this to be a source of wealth and prosperity for our province, we need to get a fair value and given that Alberta continues to practically give away our natural resources, with the lack of market access as one of the main contributors to low prices, how does the minister plan on expanding the number of markets we have access to so that we can continue to sustainably invest in the services that both the constituents of Leduc-Beaumont and Albertans need?

2:40

Mr. Nally: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, Alberta is blessed to have an abundance of natural gas, and our government is working on an actionable plan that is going to unblock natural gas shipments and support LNG exports. Over the summer my office has met with international stakeholders in Houston, and next month we're going to be meeting with more international investors so we can discuss how we can get Alberta's natural gas to international markets.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has seen investments in our energy sector plummet over the last four years due to low prices and poor policy decisions. Given that the Natural Gas Advisory Panel report outlined 48 recommendations aimed at reducing the challenges facing the natural gas sector and given that these recommendations could greatly improve the viability and competitiveness of our natural gas sector, to the minister: when will we be getting an update on the status of these recommendations, and when will the natural gas sector begin seeing the positive impacts of its implementation?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I view myself as Alberta's natural gas salesman. Our government was elected on an overwhelming mandate to stand up and represent all Albertans, and that includes the natural gas producers. That's exactly what we intend to do. This government has made tremendous efforts over the last several months to take action that is already making a difference to our natural gas producers. We've implemented recommendation 7 of the Natural Gas Advisory Panel report, that's going to work on balance on the pipeline and improve the volatility of the AECO. We will continue to update the House as we make progress.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements. If you have other meetings or appointments, I encourage you to exit the Chamber expeditiously.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a statement to make.

Teachers

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As another school year is upon us, it's my privilege to rise today and recognize our teachers here in our great province of Alberta. The teachers in our schools are more than just educators. They pass along their knowledge and wisdom, becoming mentors to our kids and young people as they grow and develop.

While I believe that families are key to a child's upbringing, it does, after all, take a village to raise a child. Teachers often become friends to the students they teach and role models for them to look up to. I'm sure that we all can look back and think of several teachers that made a positive and memorable impact on our lives. Personally, I had Mr. Thompson, Mr. Murray, Mr. Myslicki, and Ms McLellen. They taught, coached, and took time out of their personal days to help me out along the way.

Many parents get exhausted in organizing a kid's birthday party with even just eight to 12 kids for a few hours. From what I'm told, it's kind of like being a teacher except that they do it for around 30 kids in their classrooms seven hours a day, five days a week, and throughout the school year.

And, of course, life as a teacher does not end with the bell at the end of the day. Many of our teachers find themselves at home in the evenings marking school work and preparing for upcoming classes. In addition to their positions as educators, our teachers take time to act as liaisons in extracurricular activities and supervisors for those types of clubs. These things enhance a student's experience at school and make schools a more enjoyable place for many.

It's my privilege to stand and recognize these great educators for their hard work and their dedication to the learning of future generations. To those that taught me, who teach students now, and who dedicated their lives to teaching, a heartfelt thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane is rising.

Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're in the middle of a federal election, and this is one of the most important elections for Alberta and western Canada in recent memory. I want to remind you why I believe it's prudent we continue to fight the federal government's attempt to implement the disastrous carbon tax system on Albertans, which is devastating to Alberta's economy.

Proponents of a carbon tax suggest the purpose is to change behaviours to reduce dependence on GHG-emitting fossil fuel sources. Well, this is not even close to the truth. The carbon tax is not about the environment. It is merely a way for the federal Liberals to mask their incompetence and fiscal mismanagement. If you disagree with the Liberal view of the carbon tax, you're dismissed, deemed uneducated, a lesser person, or a denier. The carbon tax was created to fill the gaping budget hole they created by refusing to bring their own fiscal house in order, a fiscal problem that would have been avoided if they hadn't ruined western Canada's prosperity with their energy-killing policies. Thirty dollars per tonne of CO₂ is only the beginning; \$50, \$100, \$200, and beyond is on the horizon.

The carbon tax does nothing but hurt society without offering any concrete solutions for real emissions reductions. The UCP government of Alberta will implement our TIER plan, which is focused on technology and measurable emissions reductions in industrial sectors. It is a plan that will actually help the environment rather than tax everyday working people, that simply encourages more fiscal mismanagement by the Liberals.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We will not be pushed around by disconnected elites who can afford to buy carbon credits for their planes while average citizens struggle to afford basic needs. We will stand up for Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

National Catholic Health Care Week

Mr. Williams: Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize Catholic health week. Catholic health care's origins in North America date back four centuries, with the arrival of the nuns and sisters to the New World. For many decades the church was the only health care provider tending to the sick and needy. One hundred and fifty-six years ago, in November 1863, the Sisters of Charity, also known as the Grey Nuns, for whom the hospital in Edmonton is named, cared for the first patients in St. Albert, many of whom were First Nation peoples. Today is marked by the start of Catholic health week in Alberta, back in 1863, and that's a full 42 years before we became a province.

[The Speaker in the chair]

In our province Catholic health care continues to flourish today, and there's no debate that Catholic women of faith laid the foundation of a modern health care system. Catholic health care starts with a spiritual purpose, a calling to serve each and every person with the afforded dignity that they have, being created in the image and likeness of God.

This year we are celebrating the first-ever National Catholic Health Care Week with 124 national health care providers across Canada, October 6 to 12. In Alberta we are recognizing and celebrating the value and impact of Catholic health care as well as the legacy and the visionary courage of the founding sisters who cared for the most destitute among us for many years. Today over 15,000 Covenant Health care staff, physicians, and nurses, together with volunteers and other Catholic health care providers across the province, are privileged to carry on this legacy as key partners in our health system, serving people of all different backgrounds, faiths, and circumstances.

I pray humbly that all members of this House will join me in recognizing the tremendous contributions of the church to our modern health care system and recognize Catholic health care's legacy for all Albertans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act it is my honour as the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to table the appropriate number of copies of the committee's report on the 2017 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate. Copies of the report are available through the committee office and online.

Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Bill 14 Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

It's truly an honour to present this bill before the guests we have in the gallery here today, and I want to say in their presence that our government understands that for far too long the first peoples of this province have been pushed to the margins of Alberta's economic prosperity. By enabling the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation as a steward of the Crown, we are announcing our intent to remedy this wrong.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has a tabling.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of the tabling of a document from the RCMP of Alberta. "The Alberta RCMP are continuing to investigate in relation to the 2017 UCP

leadership campaign, specifically as it relates to identity fraud," as of August 15, 2019.

2:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any other members with tablings? The Member for St. Albert has risen with a tabling.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two. The first one is from *Chatelaine*, and it's entitled What You Need to Know about the New Canadian Climate Change Report: In Short, There's Never Been a More Crucial Time to Take Action.

The second one is a *Globe and Mail* editorial entitled Jason Kenney Has a Climate Plan – It Just Isn't a Very Good One.

The Speaker: Hon. members will all be aware that no matter what the context is, we are not to use the names of other members inside the Assembly.

Are there other tablings today?

Well, the good news is that I have a number of tablings to make. Pursuant to the Child and Youth Advocate Act I am tabling six copies of the Mandatory Reviews into Child Deaths report for the period of October 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

I am also tabling six copies of the House leaders' agreement regarding members' statements rotation, dated October 7, 2019.

In my capacity as the committee chair, pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act, I would like to table with the Assembly six copies of the following orders approved at the August 6, 2019, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: one, Members' Allowances Amendment Order 35, being Order MSC 04/19; Executive Council Salaries and Members' Services Committee Amendment Order 1, being Order MSC 05/19; Members Committee Allowances Amendment Order 14, being MSC 06/19; Transportation Amendment Order 15, being Order MSC 07/19. Copies of all the orders were distributed to members on August 9, 2019.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of Hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, responses to questions raised by Ms Renaud, hon. Member for St. Albert; Ms Hoffman, hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora; Mr. Eggen, hon. Member for Edmonton-North West; Ms Phillips, hon. Member for Lethbridge-West; and Ms Pancholi, hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, on June 18, 2019, Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance 2019-20 interim supply estimates debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and the Opposition House Leader has risen.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), (j). I'd like to read the standing order into *Hansard*: "(h) makes allegations against another Member; (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member; (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." At approximately 1:56 today the Premier, in his response to the Leader of the Official Opposition, accused the Leader of the Official Opposition of misleading Albertans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you will recall – and if not, I have pulled a ruling from June 12, 2019, where at that time: "What we saw today

was the Leader of the Official Opposition very clearly imply that the Government House Leader was saying untrue things, which, in fact, is unparliamentary.” You then, Mr. Speaker, went on to ensure that – and I believe it was myself that apologized on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition. Interestingly, not five minutes later the Government House Leader behaved in a manner not becoming of a member when he specifically used the word we all know is unparliamentary and wasn’t just skirting the rules but, in fact, broke the rules when he said, “That member, who lied about the biggest tax increase.”

The Premier did not refer to the opposition as misleading the House. Your rulings over the last six months have been very, very clear that that word, although, I’m sure, not a preferred choice in your mind, Mr. Speaker, is not ruled unparliamentary and passes the smell test, but when a member accuses another member of misleading the House, it is, in fact, unparliamentary. The Premier did refer to the Leader of the Official Opposition as misleading Albertans, and for that reason, I’m requesting that the Premier or the Government House Leader apologize and withdraw that comment.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I do so without reservation. As a way of explanation but not excuse, I had 20 years of practice in a different Legislature, where the use of that phrase was accepted, so I must unlearn 20 years of that practice and will do so. I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Hon. members, we consider the point of order dealt with and concluded.

Members, we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader is rising, perhaps for a request for unanimous consent.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 77(1) in order to proceed to second reading of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 14

Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations has risen.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to move second reading of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

It’s a great honour to begin the fall season of this Legislature with this bill to create a new organization that will help indigenous communities own and invest in major natural resource development projects.

I’m grateful for the hard work and thoughtfulness that has brought us from a campaign commitment to legislation in just a few short months. To the nearly 200 indigenous small, medium-, and large-sized businesses and financial leaders who met with me this summer to discuss the direction the AIOC should take, please know: I heard you, and I thank you. Thank you also to those experts across government who have come together to form the AIOC secretariat. It would have been impossible to be here today without your input. It has been a true collaboration and a pleasure to work

with you all. Your knowledge has helped to define what the initial idea of an indigenous opportunity corporation could be. It has also been my pleasure to hear the visions of groups from all over Alberta for this one-of-a-kind initiative. Finally, I’m thankful for my government colleagues and staff, who’ve offered sound advice along the way.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Our collective effort has a critical purpose. Together we are realizing a long-needed commitment to make life better for indigenous peoples of Alberta. Throughout the summer I visited indigenous communities all across the province. This is familiar ground for me, Mr. Speaker, having lived most of my life near the First Nations of Maskwacis. I grew up alongside indigenous friends, played with them, sometimes fought alongside of them, and I came to realize that people saw us differently and expected different things of us.

Now, summer, as you know, is the powwow season, which brings together families, friends, and communities in celebration. Mr. Speaker, it was such a privilege to join communities during their celebrations, to see the joy of people reuniting, expressing their cultures and language. I also learned that powwow is a time for healing. Song and dance help people to alleviate sorrows and deal with grief, and they’re also meant to send healing to people throughout the world.

It’s hard to believe there was a time when the powwow, this act of companionship and generosity, was outlawed in Canada, but there is a long legacy in this country of disenfranchising indigenous people from their identities and from opportunities to benefit, just as the rest of Alberta has. I wish I could say that this is a thing of the past and that systems and policies and practices are fair. We can only get there deliberately.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that there is a better future for indigenous people, and that future depends on us choosing to take real action. Real action started early in this mandate. We have made it clear from the very start that we would abandon symbolic gestures and get right to the practical solutions of indigenous peoples, from the First Nations summit Premier Kenney hosted in June, the first meeting of provincial and First Nations seniors and leaders in years; to my Calgary Stampede as Indigenous Relations minister, where I visited some of the legacy families who had been part of the Indian village for over 80 years; to my visit to Paddle Prairie, a Métis settlement recovering after the wildfires this summer; and finally, a little more than two weeks ago, signing the protocol agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy at the incredible Blackfoot Crossing historic park.

We have been present, Mr. Speaker. We have listened, and we do things differently. We commit to be partners in prosperity. Being partners is a balance, or an equation. If you think about a scale, you can imagine each side being level with the other. The reality is that too many indigenous communities are just not there yet. They are dealing with more obstacles than a lot of Canadians face. I’ll get to that in a moment. I want you to think again for a moment about that image of the scale. This time, imagine that one side has all the weight stacked on it and even has some extras on the table. My point is that we have more options for a balance available to us than we are currently using in our government-to-government relationships. It’s up to us, that side with the extra weights, to think differently about what fairness looks like so people realize the potential of indigenous peoples. We need to listen, and we need to act. We need to be willing to help remove some of those obstacles that indigenous communities face.

Our outreach is only part of the equation. In every community, in every meeting I have heard the will and the desire for progress. Some communities have benefited from the resources around them. Those communities are on their way. They have what they need to succeed. Others fare less well. Mr. Speaker, the tour of 23 communities and numerous engagements I have participated in this summer showed me that economic disparity is way too real. Every year communities face funding threats that put them at serious risk. Too often government solutions have been about pumping money into communities instead of working with them to develop capacity in business, business acumen, and to remove the obstacles that put them at risk in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, communities have young, talented workforces. What they need is the capital to get started. I would like to give an example. I've been lucky enough to be able to pursue major business interests throughout my career, taking on opportunities that I couldn't have imagined, and I fared well. I've been able to apply for loans and enter into partnerships that allowed me to create opportunities for other people through employment or training. When I travel down the highways to get home to my family, a family of people who are thriving and able to pursue their dreams with ease, I can trust that the government will act when I let them know that something needs to be better. As a citizen of an exceptional country like this, I expect nothing less.

Yet the first people to call this land home live in a different reality. Unfortunately, many struggle to find safe ways to get home from their lands. We travelled on First Nations roads this year. There were washouts this spring. I saw crumbling schools, fire halls with decades-old equipment, and in some cases First Nations with zero social support and infrastructure. What I heard over and over is that if First Nations could generate local revenue, they would begin to return those dollars into social infrastructure for the descendants of the First Peoples, who settled this area eons ago. To this day they struggle through the layers of government to get the basics they need, let alone major business opportunities. In some cases social infrastructure like access to health care and quality education is held together by layers of red tape.

It is here, in substandard expectations for indigenous people, that one of the most glaring faults in our treatment of indigenous populations is most exposed. Mr. Speaker, it's too common and too easy to think of the challenges many indigenous communities face as someone else's problem. We have a moral obligation to do better, to use the resources and abilities we have at hand to remove the barriers that have kept indigenous communities from achieving better outcomes. We can balance that equation. We need to start by righting some wrongs because that legacy of mistreatment I talked about earlier is still alive and well.

Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities don't own the land they live on, and because they lack ownership, they're not able to put up collateral for major loans. Policies like that keep communities dependent on government money instead of exercising their entrepreneurial spirit and their will to thrive. Indeed, these communities were made up of Alberta's first entrepreneurs, who built strong communities within which to guide future generations, and we want to reignite that spirit. We want to see what comes with people having the means to act on their own aspirations. Sure, you'll see financing options for small loans for small business available across the country, but you will not see options for indigenous communities to gain the capital they need to buy into major projects.

What we are proposing in Alberta is a first-of-its-kind solution in Canada. The AIOC will backstop up to \$1 billion in loan guarantees, and if passed, this will allow the AIOC to work with other financial tools like equity loans. This is a game changer, Mr.

Speaker. With options like these, more indigenous communities will be able to invest in projects that can create a new revenue stream. It's fundamental for communities to be able to set up the projects, the programs, and the services they need without having to depend on federal dollars to do it.

I was talking about evening out the sides so we can become partners in prosperity. Indigenous communities bring a light to another factor that matters a lot in Alberta, land use. Now, let's be sure to give industry players in Alberta their due. They have stepped up to encourage, support, and employ world-leading technologies and practices that reduce the effects of drilling on Alberta's landscape. This is the land we share and all the air we breathe. When we talk about natural resource development, we talk about being responsible stewards of those resources, and when industry talks with indigenous communities about projects, they will also discuss traditional uses of the land. By increasing indigenous ownership of natural resource projects or supporting equity investments in natural resource projects, we are vouching for an even better, cleaner, safer future for more people and a future that allows people to practise their traditional uses on the land.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked about the access to capital as being a singularly challenging barrier for indigenous communities. It is far from the only threat to community well-being. The reality is that indigenous communities often face multiple social and economic issues, and they are complex issues. We all know that complex issues need to be addressed at many levels, and there is no magic to this. There is no single solution. The complexity of problems some indigenous communities experience is tied to a variety of issues, and many of them are generational, but to ignore something as fundamental as access to revenue is to turn a blind eye to a problem that we can address in a respectful way.

There is another thing I learned. Indigenous communities are deeply interested in responsibly developing the resources around them, and we need to start somewhere. They want to build businesses and technical capacity around them, and because unemployment is at a staggering rate, on some First Nations up to 99 per cent, employment is critical to building stronger communities.

Let me just share a story with you from this summer. I was up at Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation, and if you want an example of business acumen, entrepreneurship, and local employability, look no further. Their industrial dry cleaning business is the largest in North America. In fact, the only one that's even close to it is by the Disney corporation. The First Nation also operates a very impressive safety coverall manufacturing facility. It was so busy. I was there on a Sunday, and they were busy working away. Some of these people have worked there from the very start of this operation. It was just a joy, and they were all so proud of what they were doing. This is just one of the many opportunities recognized by indigenous communities.

To those who say that indigenous people don't want oil and gas extract operations on their lands, I ask them to talk to the First Nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy, which have been involved in the oil patch for seven decades, or to talk to Suncor Energy, whose businesses deal with the Fort McKay First Nation and the Mikisew Cree First Nation. It's a study in indigenous collaboration. By forging these partnerships, Fort McKay and Mikisew have more stable revenue to support community needs, and they are thriving.

3:10

I do not need to talk about the incredible success of the Enoch Cree Nation. Just drive a few minutes west of Edmonton to see the business hub that is popping up there. Chief Morin and his council are to be commended for an amazing vision. The Frog Lake First Nation has its own oil producing company, the Frog Lake Energy

Resources Corporation, a heavy oil producer that sees thousands of barrels produced every day. The Primco Dene group of companies is a wholly owned company of the Cold Lake First Nation with 16 companies under its umbrella, employing 700 employees in the region, a stunning 80 per cent indigenous employment rate.

Those are just a few examples of some of the success cases that can be found amongst indigenous communities in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, as you can understand, they want to enjoy a higher standard of living than they have been largely able to do. They want future generations to enjoy the bounty this land brings and the option to make good decisions on how to manage it. Most of all, they want dignity.

We have benefited from their stewardship and will continue to honour the past by working together. The AIOC is part of the solution, that balanced equation that will bring the provincial and indigenous governments together as partners in prosperity. Another part of that solution is business and investors here in Alberta and elsewhere. I urge them to look to indigenous communities as partners as well. By working together, I'm confident of the mutual benefits that come of learning from each other and of finding in indigenous communities people with skills, talent, and motivation to work hard to invest in their futures.

This is an untapped market. Let me illustrate. In 2013 indigenous businesses accessed .2 per cent of the total available capital in Canada. The national aboriginal economic development board estimates that if indigenous business accessed capital at the same rate as other Canadian businesses, their share would stand at 10 per cent of the total available capital. Unless we do something to work around arcane legislation, this situation will not change, and indigenous communities will continue to live on the sidelines of prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough. Our government was elected to get Alberta working again, and we mean all of Alberta. As Minister of Indigenous Relations I commit every single day to work to secure adequate supports and pursue opportunity with indigenous people. That is why this government has already set up a \$10 million indigenous litigation fund so indigenous voices fighting for their right to responsibly develop resources will be heard in courts when others are trying to stop them, and that's why we've been meeting government to government to foster and formalize our relationships going forward. Signing the protocol agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy was a step to guarantee regular meetings together about concerns of interest and to give those First Nations governments the kind of attention the rest of us expect. That reduces yet another barrier. Enabling the AIOC in legislation is our next step in partnership to address the long-standing economic gaps between communities in Alberta.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, to do the right thing, to show indigenous communities respect instead of patronizing their path to prosperity. In that spirit of reconciliation we can and we will achieve a lot together.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this time to address the House about the AIOC. I look forward to unanimous agreement to enact the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister, for your words. I would just like to check. You are moving Bill 14 for second reading, correct?

Mr. Wilson: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Are there any other members looking to speak to Bill 14? I see that the hon. Member for Peace River has risen.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. I'm so honoured today to rise and speak on this very important piece of legislation, which I've read cover to cover. I'm very impressed with it in many ways, not least of which – to echo the minister's statement: this isn't fluff; this isn't just symbolic. We're getting right to it. You won't find one statement in there – it begins with definitions, and it ends in regulations – of fluff or symbolic gesture. It really is trying to lift up the First Nation peoples and Métis and the indigenous of Alberta. I'm so pleased to speak to it for exactly that reason: our government's commitment to the economy, particularly addressing why too often in our province's history indigenous Albertans have not always been a full partner sharing in our prosperity as a province and a country.

Just this morning I was speaking to Chief Trevor Mercredi of the Beaver First Nation, and he put it very well. He told me that when the First Nations of Alberta prosper, all of Alberta prospers. I think this simple message gets right to the heart of what this legislation seeks to achieve: getting First Nations, Métis, and all of Alberta's indigenous working up from that 95 to 99 per cent, as we heard from the minister, unemployment rate and giving them the dignity of work. Dignity is found in work, and giving them the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families and their communities is why we want to partner with these communities like we haven't seen before with this groundbreaking legislation, a first-in-Canada solution.

This must be a top priority of any government, and it's certainly a top priority of the United Conservative government, giving people everywhere a hand up. Yesterday I was chatting with the Beaver First Nation, my constituents, along with the Minister of Agriculture, and I've met with every other chief and council in my riding. We met with these communities. We speak to them, and we look to them for their leadership. They provide leadership to us in government on these issues, looking to expand the forestry industry in our constituency and on their territory, looking to expand agriculture, which they had been invested in for hundreds of years in the province in the far north – and I'll speak more to that later – and looking, of course, to expand Alberta's proud tradition of developing our natural gas resources. They want to be full partners in this development.

They face a number of challenges, though, that many Albertans may not. They don't enjoy the same property rights in the reserves that other Canadians take for granted. They often end up in many situations fighting against a very thick bureaucracy, both provincially and federally, and for this they have my heart. I am with them. I want to cut the red tape that stops these communities from thriving and prospering in our province. Too often this leaves them dependent on programs and settling for lower standards of living conditions layered on with more bureaucracy rather than being a part of this economic development that we see in the province and we see in Alberta like we've seen nowhere else in the world. The culture of dependency has to end, and the First Nations Albertans must be the first ones to harness creativity, and we want to work with them to that end and embrace the entrepreneurial spirit. As the minister and the Premier say often, they were the first entrepreneurs of this province and on this land. We want them to be able to chart their own destinies of where they want to go in developing these resources, of which they have a share.

It will not happen just when any government says so. It will happen when we work in partnership with indigenous Albertans and ask them, as we are doing in this government – and that is what this legislation is a product of – how they most want to participate in the shared economy, ensuring that indigenous Albertans have access to capital to finance their projects and ensuring that First Nations are full partners in projects that profoundly impact their livelihoods and

territories and, most importantly, ensuring that every First Nation and Métis family has jobs to put food on the table and a roof overhead. That is what this bill is about.

I want to speak briefly now to some of the First Nation communities that I deal with on a first-hand basis in my constituency to give you context for why this bill matters to them directly. Now, every one of these groups not only have I met with, but so has the minister, and I want to first thank the minister deeply for coming to my constituency, to the most northern reaches of this province, to Meander River. The only place farther than that is a place called Indian Cabins, inhabited by two people, right on the border. There has never been a minister attending anything in this community before. The smiles on the faces of these men and women could not have been larger. The pride that they had in their communities as they showed it to the minister and myself could not have been bigger.

I want to speak a bit about those First Nations and what they have. The Dene Tha' First Nation is actually not Cree. They are from a very different cultural and ethnic and linguistic group from the north, and they have a very unique and driven culture, largely driven by the love of their land. They have a very deep love of the faith that was first brought to them by the Oblate Fathers that came to visit them, and they were very proud to have shown us this when they came up. In fact, it occupied much of the time of what they were showing.

The territory that they sit on is vast and might seem desperate and empty to many, but to the Dene Tha', they found it bountiful, and they love it very, very deeply. They want to be partners with us in how they find the resources in that land, in forestry and agriculture, and open it up to be prosperous. They saw that this is what happened for many of the earlier generations of Alberta, and they see no reason why they cannot today also take part in the development of these resources in a responsible way for their prosperity as well.

3:20

I mentioned that the Beaver First Nation, which is a very proud group, came to visit the minister of agriculture and myself just yesterday. They have a mixed heritage between Dene and Cree, and they have roots across the largest geographic area I've ever seen, going all the way down to southern Alberta, and have settled right on the bounds of the Boyer River. Between the Boyer and the Child Lake reserve is what makes up their territory. They have actually been farming the land in northern Alberta hundreds of years before any others thought it was actually in any way viable, long predating the settlers that came north. They today still want to continue opening up this land, and they want to, as we learned yesterday with the minister of agriculture, be a part of any kind of land opening up that this government would do, because they find it is an important part of their economy and an important part of their heritage. Something that is often missed when they talk about First Nation communities is that they have a deep love of agriculture and a ranching tradition.

I want to speak also about the Tallcree First Nation. Chief Rupert Meneen also settles in the far north and also visited with the minister and myself. They have so many entrepreneurial means of moving ahead. They have taken so many efforts, a very sophisticated group, where they want to take part in the forestry, agriculture, and particularly the oil and gas industry, much of which they couldn't even tell us about because of the works that they were currently working on. They can't wait to take part in this Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation because they saw right from the start the opportunities that they are opened to when they have that kind of capital backing them. They are not a group that is waiting for a handout; they want a hand up, and they are taking it

even before this opportunity. This will only strengthen them and embolden them to go further.

They also have a deep, deep love of the land on which they live, and it's very heartwarming to see the way that they care for and look for a balance in how they develop their natural resources and how they continue to make sure that they put back into the land what they feel they get out of it. They're working very well with multiple different groups in the area, including Mackenzie county, the MD of Opportunity, and the federal government. They're opening up a new school, which I hope the minister can help me open up this fall. It's a beautiful community set right on the Wabasca River between the Tallcree north and south reserves.

I also want to speak about Little Red. Chief Conroy is probably one of the most enigmatic gentlemen I have ever met. He's a character, and he has the kind of mind that you want to enter into business with because he will find a way to make a dollar for you and himself and everyone who is working with him. He has a shrewd sense of business and a deep love of his people. He is the most engaged chief, I'm told, that that community has had in a very long time. Fox Lake, which is a fly-in, fly-out community, probably, I would say, the most remote community that I know of in the province: he has a deep love for it along with John D'Or and Garden River. These areas have some of the largest populations of First Nations in my constituency, and they're highly independent. They're fly-in, fly-out, and they have found all sorts of ways – through manufacturing, through opening up oil and gas at times, buying into projects across the province – to support their communities, and they're looking for more. In our meeting with them they made sure they let us know the priorities that they had. They want to make sure that they have transport in and out of the communities so that they're not just fly-in, fly-out, and they want to make sure that they're taking part in this new, growing economy that Alberta is about to go through with the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation.

I also want to speak to the Paddle Prairie Métis community. As the minister mentioned: heartfelt. What happened there broke the province's heart, with 16 homes burning down. They struggled deeply in the time of the fire, but they have come back together in a very big way, and they are stronger for having gone through that. They have a deep love of their land. The Métis people, along with the First Nations, aren't unlike many Albertans, where we aren't people who just like Alberta as an abstract idea. It's the land under our feet. It's the land we plow, that our cattle graze, the streets that we drive, the homes in which we live. It is the physical territory that matters to them. It's a true patriotism and love of that land that they have. It's deeply connected to them, and we saw that in Paddle Prairie as the men and women during that fire fought, many of which were risking life and limb, along with many volunteer firefighters from across the province and High Level to protect homes. Sixteen burned, but innumerable were saved because of the work of those men and women.

They are incredibly excited. I believe that certain members of that community even put their name forward to be on this board, and I highly recommend that the minister does choose some of these men and women because they have a deep sense of economic insight. They have been working nonstop since their entire creation. As a people mixed of both western and indigenous heritage, they see how to straddle both sides of that and work both cultures in a way where they can find the best way forward culturally, economically in being prosperous. They want to work with Alberta. They want to work with their neighbours to find prosperity in Paddle Prairie.

I guess I should also mention – let's see – Beaver, Tallcree, Dene Tha', Little Red, and Paddle Prairie. These are the major Métis settlements and reserves in my constituency. There are many First

Nations living in Fort Vermilion and across the constituency which also are related to these First Nation communities, and they will benefit as well through this increased economic opportunity that will be created.

It is so important that we as a province make it a priority, and I want to make sure that this investment by the government truly is seen as a vibrant stimulation of our northern communities. We have nearly 3,000 Métis individuals living in my constituency and over 8,000 First Nation peoples in my riding. That is the diversity of my constituency. Between the French, the English, the German of the Mennonites, the Dene, and the Tallcree, we have a true Wild West in the north. We love working together despite rubbing up against each other at times. We find it is an opportunity for us to work with each other when the economy is growing, and that's why I am thrilled this bill will improve the lives of all of my constituents and not just the First Nations.

On that, I want to thank the Premier for his initiative deeply. I want to, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity, but more than that, I want to thank, truly, the Minister of Indigenous Relations for the leadership he has shown and for the work he has done.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to speak to this matter.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 14, the first introduced in our present sitting. I'd like to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations for introducing this bill. It's nice to start the session off with a bill where I think we can get wide support in this House for what I think is a positive initiative and one which I hope, as the time goes on in our discussions here in the House, we have an opportunity to debate from a perspective of both believing in the ultimate intent of the bill and debating more about how we work together to achieve a really positive outcome for the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in this province as opposed to the other kinds of fights we sometimes have in this House. So it is with real pleasure that I stand up on behalf of the Official Opposition in this House and talk about the fact that we have intention to support this bill as we understand it at this particular time and that we look forward for an opportunity to learn a bit more.

I'll take a few minutes just to talk about some of the experiences I've had with the indigenous communities in this province and then speak a little bit more directly to the bill, just as the previous speaker did. I will take an opportunity to do the same because, of course, every single one of the communities mentioned both by the minister in his speech and the Member for Peace River in his speech I have been at, including Meander River, by the way. I am very pleased to have been the first and, in fact, only Minister of Indigenous Relations to have visited all 48 of the First Nations in this province and, of course, all eight of the Métis settlements, where I had an opportunity to sit down and have those really important discussions that happen when you sit down face to face and say to people: I am here to listen, and I really want to know what it is that's very important to you.

All of those chiefs and Métis settlement leaders that have been previously mentioned here are people that I have sat down with on multiple occasions. In fact, all of the reserves mentioned such as the Dene Tha' and Little Red and Tallcree and Beaver and Cold Lake, Whitefish (Goodfish): all of those communities I've been to not only once but on multiple occasions and visited with them here in the city of Edmonton, at the Legislature typically, to have these kinds of discussions, so I know that this is a community that is very interested in working with the government for the benefit of all

peoples in the indigenous community. You know, when you sit down and have conversations with them, they tell you about the needs, and it is very clear that the needs in the indigenous communities right now are very high. The reason why they're very high, we know, is because there have been a significant number of structural barriers that prevented indigenous communities from being successful in the past.

3:30

When I do speak to people who, you know, haven't had as much of an opportunity as I have to speak with members of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in this province about the difficulties – the lack of employment, the lack of housing, and so on – in many of these communities, they often ask me: why? Why is it that they have not been part of the success of this fabulous province of Alberta? I have to remind them that there are very many reasons why that is true, but one of the things we have to be really clear about is that the reasons do not lie with the indigenous communities primarily but, rather, lie with us; that is, the government of Alberta and the people who have constructed the social dynamics under which they have had to live for the last hundred-plus years in this province.

When we take a look at things such as residential schools, the '60s scoop, we have to understand that we have done things in this province that have caused those desperate circumstances in those indigenous communities, and we need to take responsibility for all of those things. In fact, when reserves were first created here in this province and the First Nations people were taken off the land which they had been using quite effectively for thousands of years and multiple generations, many hundreds, thousands of generations, we created a circumstance where they were unable to participate in the economic well-being of this province by virtue of being physically excluded from participation, put into a place where they were not able to engage in the things that were happening in this province.

On top of that, we made all kinds of rules that prevented them from even beginning to participate such as being forced to not leave the reserve lands unless they had the written consent of the Indian agent. Now, of course, subsequently it was demonstrated that that was an illegal law or rule that was put in in this province, that they had no right to restrict them to the First Nations communities, the reserve lands. But we did it anyways, even against our own national laws. Then we made it illegal for these First Nations to even be able to have a lawyer to challenge the federal government on these kinds of issues. So when we ask, "Why are indigenous people not participating in the economy?" it's because we told them they could not, and we put in significant barriers to prevent them from participating. It's, you know, important for all of us now to take responsibility for that fact.

I see the bill put forward by the Minister of Indigenous Relations as having the possibility of opening up a door that has not been opened up before, and that is why I'm standing to support it. That's why I'm happy to be here and say that anything we can do to take our foot off the backs of indigenous people so they can become full participants in the economic viability of this province I am absolutely thrilled to support.

We know, as Chief Trevor Mercredi at Beaver First Nation said, that when First Nations do well, all people do well. We know that not only will we see a benefit on the reserves when economic development begins to grow and expand, but we will see all the communities around those reserves begin to benefit because, of course, they will be able to have more shops to go to. They will be able to have more people coming to their shops to buy things because there will be more money available in the communities. So I am very happy that this is happening.

In fact, I was very concerned, when this government first came in, that they were taking actions which I thought were exactly contrary to the intent of this bill. I was very concerned that while in Bill 14 they are seeking to enhance economic opportunities for indigenous people, when they first came in, they started to do things to remove economic opportunities from indigenous people.

For example, we had the best climate leadership plan in North America at the time that this government came into power, and one of the very first things they did was that they eliminated that plan. Now, they eliminated it for whatever ideological reasons they had, but one of the things that they need to take responsibility for is the fact that a significant part of that climate leadership plan involved the participation of First Nations from across this province.

In fact, I'm very proud to say that in the development of our indigenous climate leadership plan, we invited all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements plus the Métis Settlements General Council plus the Métis Nation of Alberta to come together to help develop the indigenous climate leadership plan. They told me at that meeting that that was the first time that the Métis and the First Nations people sat at the same table since the late '60s, early '70s, when they sat at a table together fighting the White Paper in order to protect the rights of indigenous people. It had been over 40 years since all of those people had gathered together to have a conversation together to help create a better world in the province of Alberta, and I'm very proud that our NDP government created the circumstance under which that had happened after many years of void.

I am very concerned as well that there have been economic opportunities that have been taken out of the indigenous community because they killed that plan, because they killed the indigenous climate leadership plan. I just want to comment on many of the communities that have been mentioned by the two previous speakers. For example, we talked about Little Red, where I went up to help cut the ribbon for the opening of the massive set of solar panels they put up on all their public buildings. I was very pleased to have been there to do that.

I was very pleased to hear Tallcree being spoken about, because when Tallcree designed the school that they're hoping to attend the opening of sometime later this fall, I sat down with them and said, "What kind of environmental program and structures have you put into the design of the school?" They said, "Well, we haven't had a chance to do that." I said, "Well, let's use the indigenous climate leadership program to do that very thing." We provided \$3 million for them to build the school in such a way that they will have less cost in running that school for the life of that school. Not just for the benefit today but for the life of that school, they will be doing two things at the same time. They'll be taking care of the environment, and they will be teaching their kids at a lower cost. That's the kind of positive development that was possible under the indigenous climate leadership plan, and I'm very sorry that the government has decided to take that kind of money out of indigenous communities.

I also, of course, want to talk about the fact that the minister mentioned going up to Whitefish (Goodfish), where I also had an opportunity to visit and visit the laundry facilities as well. I also want to note that in our government we provided \$100 million to bring water to reserves. Lo and behold, one of the primary programs was the program to bring water to Whitefish (Goodfish) so that they can continue that laundry facility. Yet this government has not promised any new money for water to reserves, so I've just been very concerned about what's happening with Bill 14.

I'm very pleased that this government is continuing many of the programs. I'm very pleased that the Blackfoot Confederacy protocol agreement, that we established through lots of significant hard work and close relationships with the Blackfoot community, was re-

signed recently by this government. So I'm very happy to know that you're continuing some of the good work that the NDP government did. I'm very happy to know that the work that we have been doing to enhance the lives of indigenous people may continue under this government, and I will be holding them to account on all of those other things.

I do have a few questions about Bill 14 because when we went to the prebrief, they were unable to answer a lot of the questions. For example, you'll notice that in Bill 14 there's no mention about how much money is being set aside – the bill itself does not identify the number of dollars – to actually build this particular program nor how much money will be available to people in the indigenous community afterwards. So we have some questions. We need to know what's happening.

The bill also doesn't identify how many indigenous people will actually be on the board that is running this corporation, so again we have some questions. I'm glad it's there, but they haven't identified that. The bill has good intent, but it seems a little bit hollow, so we are really, actually, looking forward to the opportunity to answer some of these specific questions.

3:40

One of the big questions that I have is: why is it that when they are creating economic opportunities for indigenous people, they are telling indigenous people what their economic opportunities have to be? Why is it that they have determined on their own, without consultation with indigenous people, what they're allowed to borrow money toward? That's very problematic.

I heard from the minister a number of statements about how important it was to talk to indigenous people and not to impose policy on them, and then immediately I see a bill that says: you may only borrow this money for resource development. I find that a little confusing, and I really look forward to the chance in further debate to ask some further questions about: why is it that indigenous people are okay to be economically successful in the resource sector but that in other areas of economic development the government has no interest in being supportive? I just have some confusion and have some concerns. For example, under the previous NDP government we were able to help create the Alberta indigenous tourism association. I don't see the possibility for the tourism association to create new indigenous jobs and a new indigenous economy through this particular bill. Why not?

I know that the Beaver people were mentioned, and so were the Little Red people and all of their communities, and I see that there is opportunity for them to be involved in forestry and oil and gas development but not other things.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very much enjoying hearing my colleague's comments regarding Bill 14, Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I just wondered if the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would be able to continue.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to just say a little bit more. While I am very much looking forward to supporting this bill and intend, absolutely, at this point to vote in favour and encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favour of this bill, we simply have a number of questions that we would like to ask.

The questions that we do want to ask are ones about: why is it limited in the way that it's limited? Why is it only okay for

indigenous people to reinforce a particular initiative on the part of the provincial government as opposed to providing them the ability to make choices for themselves about that? I mean, there are a number of ways that they could have done this. We have, for example, the aboriginal business investment fund, the aboriginal economic partnership program, and, of course, the First Nations development fund, which comes from casino revenues. Monies could have been provided through all of those programs in order to provide opportunities for businesses other than resource extraction. It could be retail. They could be businesses in terms of manufacturing. There could be businesses in terms of tourism. Yet none of these are being supported by this bill, so I am just curious.

I have lots of questions, so what I'll do is that I'll actually make a suggestion here. We were very happy on this side of the House to support the government in the unanimous decision to go immediately, on the same day as the bill was introduced, into second reading. We were very pleased to be able to do that because I think it was very important. We had guests from the indigenous community. We want them to know their government really does care for them, whether it's the government, the official side of the House, or on the opposition side of the House. That makes me very proud.

I would suggest now that we should go immediately into voting on second reading at this particular time to solidify that demonstration of our support. As I sit down, I would make a request to the House that we move immediately to a vote on Bill 14 so that we can then proceed to the opportunity to ask questions later on in committee.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any other members looking to speak on this matter? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has risen.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to rise and speak today in support of Bill 14, Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. With the horrors of residential schools and through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, all of Canada has been called to walk the path of reconciliation with the indigenous people, on whose land we have built this federation. Specifically, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on Canadians to "ensure that [indigenous] peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that [indigenous] communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects." This is a challenge to Canadians to ensure that indigenous communities are partners in the prosperity of our federation. Our Conservative government has accepted that challenge. Our Conservative government has committed to walk the path of reconciliation side by side with our indigenous peoples as partners, partners in prosperity.

With this bill our government responds to that call to action by ensuring that indigenous communities have the opportunity to participate in economic development projects across our province. This bill, through the creation of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, will facilitate indigenous participation in the development of our natural resources. With the creation of this corporation we are reserving \$1 billion for indigenous communities to become full partners in prosperity. This \$1 billion will be allocated to loan guarantees and other mechanisms to support indigenous ownership in major resource development projects. This ownership is important because it ties our economic fate together, so when these large resource developments are built, we prosper together. That is the same way we will reconcile the past: together. And together we will walk forward to provide a higher standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, the indigenous communities that I've spoken to want to provide a higher standard of living. Indigenous communities in our province want to achieve this with wealth generated from our natural resources, because these communities realize the vast wealth that comes from their land that their ancestors walked for generations. Indigenous peoples have the desire, workforce, and motivation to become partners in our resource prosperity.

Moreover, indigenous communities have the desire to move forward to a better and brighter future. I've seen it first-hand, Mr. Speaker. I've lived my entire life within a 15-minute walk of the Tsuut'ina Nation, and I've seen first-hand that they're a nation of rich culture, tradition, with a proud history of community leadership, successful commerce, and entrepreneurial spirit. The Tsuut'ina have shown their commitment to partnering in resource development, and this was exemplified by their hosting of the 2019 indigenous resource council energy summit. This energy summit was a massive step toward First Nation ownership in energy projects and included discussion of models of First Nation ownership in pipelines like the Trans Mountain pipeline.

The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation provides the opportunity for further partnership and the opportunity for economic reconciliation. It links our prosperity together so that when indigenous people thrive, all Alberta thrives.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to act on reconciliation, not just talk about it. It's time to uphold our commitments on reconciliation. In fact, this morning at the announcement one of the chiefs spoke of reconciliation. That is what this represents to me: reconciliation. Today, by supporting this bill for the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, I uphold one of my earliest commitments as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Earlier this year, on May 29, I rose in the Assembly, and in my maiden speech I said:

I am committed to meet the moral obligation that we have to empower First Nations to be full partners in the development of the resources that lie below their lands, which their ancestors first inhabited, and to become full partners in prosperity.

I am still committed to that ideal, to reconciliation. My commitment to reconciliation so that indigenous partners can partner in a new wave of Alberta natural resource prosperity is the basis for my support of this bill.

This bill will bridge the gap for indigenous groups to secure adequate capital from financial institutions to increase their capacity to become true owners in resource development. This bill will make us national leaders in action on economic reconciliation, and I want to personally thank the minister for his leadership on this.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that members of this Assembly commit themselves to walking the path of reconciliation by forging a relationship, a partnership in prosperity, by giving their support for this bill and supporting the development of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available, and the individual who caught my eye was the hon. Member for Peace River.

3:50

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for that speech. I'm interested in the contrast between your speech and the member previous, from Edmonton-Rutherford. There was a line that you repeated over and over again about how First Nations, Métis, indigenous Albertans: when they thrive, Alberta thrives. It's in stark contrast to the language used by the member opposite as he said that it is our fault,

some sense of self-blame in some way for the reason that we have gotten to this place and why First Nation communities have struggled. The difference is, from where I'm sitting in the United Conservative caucus and where I sit in northern Alberta with my First Nations and Métis friends and neighbours, that they tell me they're not victims, and I agree. I think that difference in attitude is seen very large. Where I come from, the First Nation and Métis people don't want identity politics to be played anymore. They don't know what it is. They don't have time for it. What they want is a part in prosperity, to work towards a balanced economy where both they thrive, the environment thrives, the economy thrives, and therefore the province thrives.

I also heard the member earlier, in contrast to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, say that we took money out of the hands of indigenous communities. What took money out of the hands of indigenous communities – and I'm sure the Member for Calgary-Glenmore would agree – was, yes, exactly that, the climate leadership plan with the carbon tax. It was all economic pain, no environmental gain, and it did nothing but tax the poor residents of northern Alberta, indigenous or not, because of the geography of where we live. This is true for so many of our First Nation peoples.

I would just like your comment on the difference between the tack that you've taken and the tack that we've seen members opposite take.

Ms Issik: Thank you to the Member for Peace River. I will speak of my neighbours next to my riding, the Tsuut'ina Nation. You know, our history is sad. Our history is sad, and there is a reason that we must reconcile, but we must work on that together. We must have a positive view for the future. I have seen the Tsuut'ina Nation, who throughout my lifetime have been amazing business people. They have done incredible works on their land. They have created great prosperity for their people, but there is so much more that can be done. Currently they are working on an amazing development along the ring road.

I can tell you that when we look at development and we look at resource development, the gap that is being addressed by the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation is one that is vast. This access to large capital for these nations to be able to fully develop the resources below their land or to develop a downstream or a midstream operation has never ever been available, and now it will be with the backstop of the Crown. I think that presents enormous opportunity and great prosperity in partnership.

I think partnership and working through reconciliation together is important. Doing this together is important. All of Alberta will thrive as our indigenous people thrive. I want people to recognize how important reconciliation is as we move forward and truly think about reconciliation of the past and how we can move towards the future together.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, there are still a few seconds left on 29(2)(a) should anybody be looking to speak to that. Do I see any other members? I see the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has risen to speak.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today in this House to speak to this incredibly important piece of legislation. Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, is an integral component of our government's mandate. It is an important step in our journey towards reconciliation with the indigenous peoples of Alberta and will keep us on the path towards prosperity for all Albertans. By helping indigenous groups to proceed with ownership of natural resources and resource-related infrastructure and investment in resource projects like pipelines,

they will be empowered to pursue financial security and economic prosperity for their communities now and for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, across Canada governments at every level as well as everyday Canadians from all walks of life are recognizing and reaffirming the need to pursue reconciliation with indigenous peoples. As a province and as a country we have set off on this journey on the road towards reconciliation, but you can't build a road without a solid foundation. In my encounters with indigenous Albertans over the years – and I hope the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations and my colleagues from both parties will agree with me when I say this – I keep hearing that one of the foundational components of reconciliation is partnership. It sounds pretty simple when you first hear it. We all have some understanding of what partnership means because partnership exists in many forms. There are partners in sport. There are business partners and life partners, all of which are important in their own unique way. But in hearing just how much emphasis was placed on the importance of partnership and reconciliation, I felt the need to revisit and reflect upon what makes Alberta's partnership with indigenous peoples so unique.

Mr. Speaker, when Europeans first arrived here, they were greeted by indigenous peoples who helped the settlers arrive. Eventually partnerships were formed in the form of trading relationships and even military alliances, and these relationships were based on mutual respect and co-operation. Generations later, after Confederation, the government embarked on a journey to forge new partnerships through the numbered treaties. As you know, Alberta is home to three of the numbered treaties, treaties 6, 7, and 8. These treaties are not significant to just indigenous communities; they're significant to all Albertans.

As a non-indigenous person it's very easy to feel removed from these treaties, but that is simply not the case. Even if you don't live on a reserve, Mr. Speaker, you still live on treaty land. I have the greatest privilege of representing the riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, which is situated on Treaty 6 land, the traditional territory of the Plains and Wood Cree and, in particular, the Enoch Cree peoples. I have a duty not only as a member of this Assembly but as an Albertan and as a Canadian to respect these treaties and acknowledge their significance.

You know, I'm not a historian, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the events leading up to the treaties and those that followed their signing are numerous and complex, but it's commonly accepted that the treaties were signed with the purpose of a renewed partnership, one that would ensure peace and prosperity for all parties involved. We now acknowledge, however, that the spirit of these treaties was not always upheld. Commitments have not always been honoured by previous governments, and certain policies had harmful effects that are still felt to this day. We see this in the outlawing of traditional practices and ceremonies, residential schools, the '60s scoop, and the forced sterilization of certain indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women and the mentally ill or disabled. We acknowledge that this damage sustained over generations has eroded the trust that was central to the partnerships that the treaties were meant to uphold. Acknowledging these historical wrongs and telling the truth about them is the first step towards reconciliation.

The next steps are about commitment to action, commitment to do better. The Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations often speak of working with indigenous Albertans in the spirit of the treaties. To me, this means creating a renewed partnership between indigenous peoples and their communities and the provincial government, a partnership that embodies what the treaties, signed well over a century ago, originally sought to accomplish: peace, mutual respect, and a shared prosperity.

That kind of meaningful partnership, Mr. Speaker, is the kind that this bill seeks to renew and revitalize. Bill 14 builds upon this partnership by making meaningful contributions that will assist indigenous communities in pursuing prosperity for their communities. The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will allocate \$1 billion in loan guarantees, which will help support indigenous groups in their pursuit of co-ownership and financial participation in natural resource development. I believe that this bill demonstrates our commitment to partnership with indigenous peoples by offering support. This bill will help indigenous communities realize projects that they previously didn't have the financial capacity for.

Mr. Speaker, we are blessed with a beautiful province that is rich in natural resources like oil and gas, and while we commonly think of these resources as being fuel for modern technology like our cars and home heating, their uses go back over a millennium. In 1788 explorer Alexander Mackenzie noted that the indigenous groups in the Athabasca region used bitumen mixed with gum from spruce trees to seal their canoes. So while opponents of Alberta oil and gas often claim that fossil fuels have never been used by indigenous peoples, we know that's simply not true.

4:00

Albertans care deeply for our province's environment, and this is especially true for indigenous peoples, who have been stewards of this land for well over a millennium. They understand how to take care of the land. They understand the necessity of taking care of the land. So when I hear the leaders and members of First Nations across this province supporting responsible resource development, I mean, it's invigorating to see. On the land that their ancestors once lived on, on the land that they share a deep connection with, and on the land they dutifully care for, they care about natural resource development.

Mr. Speaker, there have already been countless examples of successful ventures in natural resources that we have seen right here in Alberta. One example is the Frog Lake Energy Resources Corporation in Treaty 6. Frog Lake First Nation is a small Cree community of roughly about 1,200 people. The band desperately wanted to reduce poverty in their community, so they looked to the resources beneath their land and launched their own oil and gas exploration company, the first of its kind. Struggling to secure Canadian capital, it was Chinese investors who backed their exploration project. Today Frog Lake Energy Resources Corporation extracts over 3,000 barrels of oil every single day and has over \$30 million in cash flow. This is money that has gone to improving infrastructure, reducing poverty, and improving the overall quality of life for members of the community and their families. It's gone to helping indigenous children and let them have a shot at a better future.

Joe Dion, the chair of the board, has said, quote: together we have to make reconciliation a priority given the economic risks and gridlock that continue to impede the resource sector nationally and Alberta's energy sector in particular; I believe that reconciliation can be realized right here in Alberta's energy sector; it's time to take bold action; Alberta is not at the crossroads; it's in the ditch.

Mr. Speaker, indigenous groups should not have to look across the ocean to find those willing to help finance their projects. Our government believes in the resourcefulness, resiliency, and tenacity of indigenous peoples, and that is why this bill will help allocate the financial resources necessary to help indigenous peoples across our province pursue ownership of natural resource projects. There are already so many indigenous leaders looking to buy into these projects, like the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Eagle Spirit pipeline, which, if built, will bring prosperity to those communities for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, reconciliation doesn't have a finish line. The work to repair these relationships will be ongoing for years to come. Nothing can erase the historical wrongs and tragedies that indigenous people in this province and this country as a whole have endured. Nothing can replace lost cultural connections, a lost childhood, or even lost loved ones. There's no magic bullet to a solution, but we can try to stop the cycle of poverty and desperation that has been born out of these traumas.

Mr. Speaker, most Albertans and most Canadians, for that matter, have seen their quality of life improve over the course of many decades as we have increased our production and exports of natural resources, yet many indigenous communities continually have been left behind. It is clear that they haven't historically benefited from our natural resources and historical economic growth in ways that they should. That's why we keep seeing calls for change, calls from indigenous leaders to be included in these projects so that they, too, can reap the benefits for their communities, so that First Nations can enjoy the social and economic infrastructure that is needed for indigenous Albertans to succeed.

I hope that by honouring the fundamental principles of our treaties, by maintaining a strong and meaningful partnership between the provincial government and First Nations, and by empowering indigenous communities to take control of their economic futures, Alberta will set an example for the rest of Canada and the rest of the world, for that matter, of what reconciliation looks like in action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a). I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for acknowledging me and for this opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a). We've heard and will continue to hear, I'm certain, from everyone in this Chamber, or at least those who are going to speak on this bill, of their experience with regard to their interactions with indigenous communities, and it's heartening to me given that I have two large indigenous communities in my constituency. What is a bit discouraging is what appears to be the level of interest in this piece of legislation from the members opposite, given their attendance. I guess I can't say that word, can I?

You know, I would like to hear a little more from the member who just spoke about the education he's received and the interactions he's had with members of the indigenous communities through the campaign, through his time as an elected official now, and how enriching that has been for him as a representative.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for asking that question. While my current provincial riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain does not have a First Nations community located within the riding – the two closest would be Paul band First Nation, which is located in the riding of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and Enoch Cree Nation, which is actually located in the riding of Drayton Valley-Devon – I've had extensive dealings with indigenous peoples over the years. One of the clearest examples of relationships and actually how some previous legislation by the members opposite when they were in government affected Paul band First Nation was my experience working at K3 power plant. When the expansion happened in 2007 and 2006, this was one of the largest construction projects at that time. TransAlta was actually one of the largest employers of indigenous people from Paul band First Nation, and they looked upon Sundance power plant and

Keephills power plant in Wabamun to provide stable economic and employment opportunities for many members of that First Nation.

It's unfortunate, however, just with my experience, that the accelerated coal phase-out, which was really caused by the members opposite in the last government, has affected well over a thousand people in my area, and it affected numerous people from Paul band First Nation that looked upon future construction projects with coal generation at the Keephills power plant and Sundance power plant as a way to provide for their families. I mean, there isn't a lot of economic opportunity when you're looking that far west of Edmonton. You know, TransAlta and Capital Power are seen as key economic drivers. There were many families that I talked to, that I worked with in the trenches on the construction sites, that were devastated to know that the future economic opportunities that they had were now drying up, and they didn't know where else to turn.

In my previous capacity as a city councillor in the city of Spruce Grove, I had an extensive number of meetings at Paul band First Nation looking at ways to be able to increase integration and within a spirit of co-operation find ways that Paul band First Nation can interact with the city of Spruce Grove to help provide transit opportunities, to be able to provide community services. You know, the chief at the time said that I was actually the very first city councillor from the city of Spruce Grove in the history of Paul band First Nation that actually took the time to visit the Paul band to have that conversation on their land. I was very lucky and privileged to have been given that opportunity.

You know, over the years, like I said, friends and family have interacted with First Nations both at Enoch and Paul band, and I look forward to seeing the opportunities that this bill is really going to give First Nations communities west of Edmonton for a chance for economic prosperity.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members to finish off under 29(2)(a)? There's about a minute left on that.

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by first thanking the Minister of Indigenous Relations for providing me an opportunity to rise and the first chance to speak in the House in this fall session, to speak to something that I really do support. I want to thank him for his hard work on it, and I want to thank, through him, his officials and all of the folks who handled, I'm sure, what were important consultations, conversations over the summer.

I think this is a good bill. I'm going to provide some suggestions to the minister, and I'm hoping that the minister will take it in the spirit in which it is intended, which is that I'm going to ask some specific clarification questions, those kinds of things. We'll probably do this at the amendment stage as well, just to give him a heads-up. When I raise these things, I think it's worth while to actually have an answer. Oftentimes we actually do make things better in this House. That's the point of the legislative branch. Not everything is run through Executive Council, nor ought it be.

4:10

I want to begin by saying that, obviously, access to both capital but also equity participation of various kinds is a laudable goal and an important goal given the history of access to capital for indigenous peoples across the province. I'm not just talking here about First Nations on-reserve with specific territory, but I'm also talking about Métis settlements and the Métis Nation of Alberta and

other associated, so-called "indigenous groups," as they are referred to in the act.

We have a number of urban indigenous members as well. I know that between 10 and 15 per cent of my own riding is folks who are members of one of the Blackfoot Nations, be it Kainai, Piikani, or Siksika. Folks come into town for all kinds of reasons, even if they are coming from Stand Off or out at Brocket or whatever the case may be. In fact, a large part of our restaurant, hospitality, and service sector in Lethbridge is supported by those many rural and outlying communities, and it's important not to forget the economic development from adjacent First Nations communities that comes into Lethbridge and keeps businesses moving.

One of those communities is the Blood Tribe, of course, the largest reserve by land base in the country, who were one of the recipients during the competitive auctions of the renewal energy program of the ability to have equity participation within a project. What we learned through that process was – you know, at first, when we were designing the process, I remember we said: oh, should it be 10 per cent equity participation or more? I remember the larger nations like Blood Tribe saying to us: oh, no; we can handle 25. They were really gung-ho to get in there, a pretty business-friendly chief and council there. They did outcompete a number. In fact, they outcompeted the no indigenous equity participation. That's how excited they were about pulling together equity participation for energy projects. Right? It's a renewable energy project, but it's an energy project, and we're an energy province in every sense of that word.

Another one of the recipients for the Stirling project that partnered with Potentia was Paul band, in fact. Paul band was just chatted about. Paul band also had a number of other projects around the province.

We saw that every First Nation in some way, shape, or form participated in indigenous climate leadership initiatives, whether that was through investments in training, which is a really key, important part, not just sort of trades training, although that's important too, but accounting, legal training, all of those sorts of things so that people can actually participate meaningfully in projects. Energy efficiency and clean tech programs, retrofitting programs, and so on: those are also energy projects.

I think that through the course of this debate what we should be doing is making it clear to the nations the future of those programs, in addition to the aboriginal business investment fund, the aboriginal economic partnerships programs, and the First Nations development fund, just so that we're really clear with the nations. Like I said, we have so much enthusiasm for these projects, and there are going to be a lot of folks now looking at this bill, looking at what it means, looking at the reg-making process. They're going to want to know how this fits into their overall business development strategy. I think that's the first thing. That piece of clarity from the minister's office would be helpful.

Another piece of clarity that would be good is that we had \$400 million worth of loan guarantee programs around clean tech, that had to do with Emissions Reduction Alberta, our clean tech fund. They weren't, obviously, just for indigenous resource companies or other indigenous initiatives, but they were participating in some of that. What is the overlap there? What is the future of those programs, and how does it interact or articulate with what's being proposed in this bill? I think it's an important question to answer. I mean, answering it back to me is fine, but the more important audience here, obviously, is all of the indigenous communities that are really excited about this bill. They just want to know how it kind of interacts with all of the other things they've got going on.

I think another piece that we can probably clear up when it comes time to amend things is around section 2(12)(a) and (b). In (12) it says that the minister may make regs

- (a) respecting the natural resource projects and related infrastructure . . .

Fine. We understand that. And then:

- (b) expanding the mandate of the Corporation to facilitate investment by indigenous groups in other types of projects.

We know that renewable energy is defined within the act. It's defined within the renewable energy act, that was passed a couple of years back. It's a pretty simple definition. In this section we could amend this act to allow for other kinds, not just natural resource projects. You may even find that definitionally you have some issue because the sun is also a natural resource. But renewables are in fact defined – right? – so you have captured within that the various forms of wind, solar, biomass, and hydro, basically.

The reason I raise this is that, one, we've got a lot of sort of big solar projects moving forward out there on the landscape, and I know of First Nations who are interested in taking equity or are in active conversations. This might help them bring some of those projects over the line. I know that there were some First Nations that were really disappointed that they just didn't make it into the REP auctions, so this might allow them to move forward with some of those projects that have already gone through a development or permitting stage.

Finally, there are a number of interesting projects out there around hydro, and there have been, at least to my awareness, preliminary conversations, probably in some places more than preliminary, that I may not have ever been made aware of, but there's a tremendous opportunity there, too. We should make sure that First Nations and Métis have access to those opportunities as well. It would be a shame to miss them simply because it's either not captured by the original act or because the reg-making process takes a little longer than it otherwise might. You never know with reg-making processes. At least, some of the people on this side know that sometimes that can take a while.

The other piece, on page 3, section 3(1) – sorry. That previous section that I made reference to, Minister and Mr. Speaker, was under Establishment of Corporation, section 2(12). In section 3, in understanding what is meant by indigenous groups, we have section 3(1)(c), where it says: "Metis groups as defined by the regulations." In this piece I would simply ask a question, which is: do we have places where Métis groups are defined by the regulations? I think we do, either through the Métis harvesting agreement or other associated hunting regulations or other spaces. I'm thinking here that through Indigenous Relations, for the purposes of other programs we may have that already defined, in which case I would just want to know that the MNA or others had been spoken to – probably the majority of the stakeholder group under 3(1)(c) here would be the MNA because the Métis settlements are defined – so that we're not going offside of any established jurisprudence around Métis membership. It would seem to me that we already have that, so why not put it in the act? It might be an easy thing for this act to be amended in such a way.

The final piece that I will flag for the minister that I believe might be problematic – and here's me, you know, trying to be helpful, Mr. Speaker – is that under the regulation-making authority under 14(b) we have that the regs may be made at the cabinet table "respecting appointments to the board, including the number of board members, eligibility and qualifications for appointment." This is pretty standard in establishing government agencies. However, it may be that the government may want to consider indigenous representation being explicitly enumerated within the act.

4:20

We have done this in other contexts. Certainly, you may also have an advisory council in some way. The minister may want to consider that as input. We have an Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel, enumerated in statute in the oil sands monitoring act, that must be appointed by the minister and may report to the public. That is one way that you can make sure that you have indigenous input into how your organization is being run.

That's just an example, Minister, but we have other areas where we see that we've specifically enumerated in the act that there will be indigenous representation on that board and that it won't just be a bunch of – I don't know – bankers from Bay Street although I am noticing that the head office has to be in Alberta, so that's helpful. But I would want to see people on that board who are in there and that are indigenous Albertans from the ground up, because that piece of perspective and relevance to the community is going to mean that this organization is overall successful and is overall relevant to people's lives and is overall relevant to making people's lives better.

Those are the things that just jumped out at me in a sort of first read of this bill. I think I just want to flag for the minister a couple of other points. I think that when I bring up this idea of expanding the type of projects that might be supported by such a financing mechanism, I'm saying it because, in my experience, we will be stuck in old ways if we are making choices through this act, if the opportunities corporation is making choices for indigenous peoples in terms of economic development and so enumerating the kinds of projects.

I mean, obviously, when you're giving out loan guarantees, there needs to be a certain amount of commercial viability. There needs to be a certain amount of due diligence and all of those things that go into the folks around the board table and ultimately the CEO and the executive leadership team of this organism, and those pieces are obvious. But what we don't want to do is cut off certain avenues of economic development for First Nations whose elders want them to invest in renewable energy, whose young members are saying: hey, there are all those opportunities here. We don't want people to not be able to pursue those opportunities. First Nations, indigenous communities, and our Métis communities are democracies, too, and their young people are asking for all kinds of different economic opportunities, and I wouldn't want us to miss those opportunities.

I think that ultimately what we need to understand is that this is a piece of community development that particularly, I think, can be helpful on-reserve and in rural and remote areas and can feed into a better education system, where the province is doing its part where the federal government has failed, where the province is upholding its responsibilities on delivery of health care, where the province is upholding its responsibilities around the justice system and access to justice.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Lethbridge-West for her comments and, particularly, tying in the very positive aspects of Bill 14 with some of the experiences through the indigenous climate leadership program. The member was also speaking about the REP program and the very high levels of participation. I'd be interested to hear maybe even just a little bit more about how many communities had participated and submitted proposals through that program and additional thoughts along those lines.

Thank you.

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think some of the lessons that we learned through the renewable energy program are really going to be instructive for how we move forward with the Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. It can well be that this mechanism allows for that type of equity participation in further development, obviously not around a competitive procurement process for renewables into the grid, because that's not a thing that we're doing anymore, but in other ways. There are other renewables projects that are now out there on the landscape. We had, you know – what? – 7,000 megawatts in the regulatory queue. Many of these projects are being developed either with First Nations equity participation already, or there is some, or folks are looking at their opportunities on the actual indigenous land base. We know that those things are happening as well.

I mean, what the REPs did was that they performed a really valuable price discovery function for the electricity market generally in terms of the affordability of renewables and their low cost and their ability to compete in the long term and in the long term outcompete, you know, thermal coal and other forms of generation. What they also did was that they proved that when you have indigenous participation in a project, it doesn't get more expensive, right? That part was a really important function. It proved (a) the interest and (b) the fact that First Nations were ready for this.

That's another reason why I commend this bill, because it's clear that so many – you know, you always get the chatter of: "Oh, how many bids will there be? Will it be competitive?" All of the chatter was wrong, and the REP procurement on the indigenous round was at a lower cost than the one that was just price only. So it does show that when you combine government initiatives with what's already going on in the private sector with an appetite for economic development by First Nations, a lot of the old rules are not at all relevant, and you can achieve something that is really meaningful for communities.

In the Paul band they will now have a steady stream of income, you know, for the next 20 years or so. The same goes for the Blood Tribe. The same goes for – there was a third one. I want to say that it was Saddle – I will ask *Hansard* to correct my record because it's slipped out of my mind now. That's why I think this indigenous opportunities corporation really does build on that work, because the proof of concept is sort of already there in many ways.

But – here comes the big but; it can't be all *Kumbaya*; that's not on-brand for me – ultimately, if you don't have education, health care, water, justice, early learning and child care, an emergency opioid response strategy, all of those other pieces, if the roads get washed out every single time there's a rain storm, if all of those things aren't happening, then we are not actually doing our job for the kids, that are so cute, that we run into at powwows or that I run into in the Opokaa'sin early learning centre. I always think of them whenever we have these conversations, right? I think about the world that – it is our responsibility as what I call the little Crown to make sure that we are upholding our level of responsibility. Certainly, if we were waiting for the federal government, we'd be waiting a long time in some instances. We have so much responsibility as a provincial government to deliver that, and if we're not doing all of those other things, this will be nice, but it will only be a part of it.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I see the hon. Member for West Yellowhead has risen to speak.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Sweet: Point of order. Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Ms Gray: Oh, there was.

The Acting Speaker: There was, yeah.

Ms Sweet: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Please continue.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today to speak on behalf of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. The UCP government is working hard for all Albertans because that is what Albertans elected us to do. We are working to provide opportunities for Albertans, for the indigenous people that occupy the land and their communities, and Bill 14 is a strong act by the government to partner with indigenous communities. I'm proud of the work done with indigenous leaders and communities and of all our members who've consulted with indigenous members.

4:30

Alberta is a province that takes pride in its indigenous roots and continues to promote indigenous culture provincially and across Canada. We consult with leaders, we engage with communities, and we listen to the concerns of all Albertans. Indigenous communities have been at various times in our past voiceless and ignored. History proves that we cannot leave our indigenous communities behind. It is time that our government stands up and works together with indigenous leaders.

Bill 14 is a bridge to connect government and indigenous leaders to build stronger economic and social well-being. We know indigenous communities benefit from responsible government, and we believe strong partnerships are better than neglect. Bill 14 introduces a new organization, the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, the AIOC, that will position Alberta to be a leader and steward of financial support for indigenous communities so they can seek more investments in natural resource projects. The indigenous are stewards of the land. They have fought for their land, for their right to keep their land, and for the cultural connection they have with the land. They learned to live with the land, to protect the land and its natural resources, and to prosper from it. From medicine, food, and clothing, indigenous peoples have shown us how valuable the land is, and this government will continue to give them the opportunities to continue to prosper.

The AIOC gives indigenous communities in Alberta security of their resources and their financial assets to find more opportunities to invest in resource projects that help many indigenous communities. It is a positive step in engaging the indigenous people and creating economic prosperity for Alberta. I think we can agree that we want the best for all Albertans. We come to work every day, like all working-class Albertans, to move an agenda to get things done. Mr. Speaker, this UCP government is doing just that. We continue to work with individuals, consult with community leaders, and listen to those who want to make Alberta stronger for a better future for all. It starts with Bill 14 and the work we have done in the short time we have been in government. We are creating a voice for indigenous peoples. We are encouraging communities to be stewards of the great land, and we are supporting all indigenous peoples so they have the foundation for a strong and stable future.

Mr. Speaker, I've said how many of my colleagues, myself included, have met with members of the multiple indigenous nations found in Alberta. Alberta is situated in three treaty designations: treaties 6, 7, and 8. My constituency of West Yellowhead is situated on Treaty 6. That's the land of Alexis First

Nation. I also have the opportunity to serve the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, who are an amazing nation with incredible heart and unmatched passion. We have invited community leaders, business leaders, and industry representatives to engage in these discussions with us.

We know that Alberta has a strong natural resource industry, primarily in the oil and gas sector. We are committing through the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support indigenous communities to invest in our economy and support Alberta's economic future. Alberta's indigenous community wants a government that will stand up for them and stand with them, and that is exactly what we are doing with Bill 14. We are working alongside to ensure our indigenous leaders and community members are heard, are represented, and are informed. We are engaging in their culture and promoting the spirit of their ancestors and the sacred heritage they are so proud of. There's no way to turn back time and correct the wrongdoings in our history, but we can move forward, and we can move forward together. We can create a new path towards a strong partnership with our indigenous communities to further economic growth and prosperity and empower indigenous communities to become stronger business partners in investment.

We were elected to get things done. We were trusted to strengthen these partnerships and listen to all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, this government is doing exactly that. A hundred and ninety people attended engagement sessions with this government. That is 190 indigenous community members that wanted to engage with this government and hear how the government is working hard to represent them. We have listened to indigenous leaders, to community members, to industry representatives from Alberta's largest economic contributors, to businessmen and -women. We have listened to Albertans, and we will not stop listening to Albertans because at the end of the day, I want my constituents to know that I am standing up for them every day.

Alberta is full of growth, of prosperity, of valuable resources that push our economic agenda and get our province back on track to being a leader in economic growth. Now indigenous communities want to be involved. You see through this bill that we are promoting that indigenous community investment. Alberta's indigenous communities need a voice. This government is giving them that voice to contribute to Alberta's economy so our province continues to grow economically and their communities benefit from the resources that are found on lands that their ancestors found thousands of years ago.

I am proud to stand here on behalf of Bill 14 and support this bill. I'm proud to be a member of this government that works for improving the lives of all Albertans and cares about our economic future. I believe Bill 14 sets a tone for our interaction with indigenous communities and strengthens the partnership between indigenous communities and government more than it has in previous governments. I hope that you will all join me in supporting this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Prior to affording members with 29(2)(a), I'll just clear up for the record that there was a point of order called at approximately 4:30, and I am ruling that there was no point of order as there was 29(2)(a) afforded during the last speaker.

Going forward, are there any other members looking for the opportunity under 29(2)(a) for questions and comments? I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie has risen to speak on 29(2)(a).

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I found it very interesting to hear the hon. member's comments with respect to the Alberta

indigenous opportunities corporation, and I would love to hear how he feels it will impact his community and the communities surrounding his constituency.

Mr. Long: I think that it has the potential to impact in such a major way. I had a recent opportunity, actually, to be at a round dance in Grande Cache with the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, and they are ecstatic to have a government that looks at them as equal partners, as people that we want to see succeed, and to see that look of anticipation, that in and of itself is going to impact that community in a major way. I think that's where we're coming to. We're letting all communities, all people in our communities just see that we want everyone to succeed and play a part in that success. So yeah, I see it benefiting our communities in a major, major way.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, three and a half minutes left on 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you have to remember where I'm at, you can always reach to your left hand, because we usually sit pretty close over here.

I'm very pleased that our government will be starting the session with Bill 14, a bill that will do wonders for the economic hardships found in the indigenous communities. I think every member of this Assembly would agree that the government of Alberta should be doing more to help with opportunities of the indigenous peoples. Personally, myself as a budding politician or new to this, when I heard about the potential for this bill, I was absolutely ecstatic. Being a former person from the energy sector and dealing with consultation both in Canada and the U.S. across different provinces, this one was going to be a game-changer, and I couldn't wait to share that message with the folks in our communities.

According to a recent study by the Assembly of First Nations, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, indigenous children face the highest rate of poverty in the country, with almost 1 in every 2 First Nations children living in households with low income. That statistic is undeniably abhorrent, and while examining indigenous poverty in Canada as a whole, our province has nothing to brag about. While most Canadians have seen improvement in their quality of life in the last few decades, the same can't be said for the indigenous communities. Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, that's unacceptable. As the Premier has said, the most significant step that we can take to improve this economic disparity is to extend the same opportunities to the indigenous communities. This bill allocates \$1 billion, as we heard, in loan guarantees supporting indigenous communities in their efforts to participate financially in our natural resources by pursuing co-owner development, which has made Alberta so prosperous.

The government was consulting with indigenous businesses and financial leaders throughout the summer, meeting with over nearly 200 people, as we've heard. These consultations are essential to making this an effective piece of legislation and will be an important step in building strong partnerships. I hope that these consultations will continue and that the government will continue to heed the suggestions that came from them.

4:40

Poverty is an extremely complex issue, and no one piece of legislation will come close to addressing all the causes. The stats, however, don't lie, and poverty is commonplace on many reserves. It is true that different communities do not necessarily face the same challenges. By investing in indigenous business leaders, the hope is that jobs can be created across whatever industry is most viable in

a particular community. This bill is a direct investment to the indigenous communities that empower those who wish to participate.

Access to credit and loans is a major issue facing indigenous peoples living on-reserve. Individuals living in indigenous communities do not own the lands they live on. Because of this lack of ownership they're not able to put up collateral for major loans. This creates a major impediment to entrepreneurship and small business in general. Indigenous businesses represent only a tiny fraction of Canadian capital investment, and this must be rectified. We are a government that champions the spirit of small business that allows Albertans to thrive, and this bill will help cut unnecessary red tape. It is essential that we help indigenous communities to empower themselves by listening and proposing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities are deeply interested in their own development and well-being. They deserve the ability to responsibly develop for themselves and to have the mechanisms in place to do so. Unemployment on some reserves has reached staggering levels, as we've heard from some of the members in this Legislature. Employment is essential for the building of one's skills as well as a sense of self-worth. Having known many people who at some point of their lives were unemployed, I know that these people are not content being unemployed; they simply have not found the opportunity or been given the chance. It's time that we provide the ability to build strong communities rather than accepting that the unemployment rate on-reserve is significantly higher for indigenous people than off-reserve. That is simply because there are not the same jobs present.

I can already hear the opposition. They're talking about that we're not really caring that much for the communities, and we have this slant towards favouring the oil companies. This couldn't be further from the truth. The legislation empowers indigenous communities to promote industry in whatever way they see fit. It empowers them to become partners in resource development, where historically they have had little leverage. To those that do not support this bill, I would remind them that as a citizen of Canada and one of the most prosperous provinces, one should not be unable to find work. I think we owe our indigenous brothers and sisters better. A balance of building economic prosperity at home is the best way to do so. Indigenous groups should have the ability to develop for themselves. They want future generations to enjoy the bounty of the land and also want the ability to make their own choices. It makes sense that they would want to enjoy a higher standard of living than they do today.

This legislation seeks to break down barriers that indigenous businesses have faced for years and, hopefully, to help spread the spirit of prosperity that we have enjoyed, at least to some of the least well off Albertans. With that there has been dialogue about some of the bands and reservations within the area, and a lot of us are bordering jurisdictions. Within my constituency I have the Paul band, the Alexis, and also the Alexander. I've met with the chiefs and I've met with the councils, and the unanimous consent on this: it isn't asking for help or a hand up or any of those types of things; it's simply asking to be fellow participating Albertans. One former chief had put it to me. He says: you know, if you were here 20 years ago, I'd probably have the war paint on, you'd be in a business suit, and we'd be fighting out in the hallway. But those aren't the days that we're facing today. We're looking toward these partnerships, and we're looking to be active participants. We're also looking at budding energy companies that are looking to actually partner and do the right thing to have those opportunities to build it.

I had those opportunities before in the pipeline industry of sitting at those tables with those individuals, and in my new role as a

politician I'm able to join a couple of these like-minded folks together. The Paul band, for example: it's going to be a great release. We'll have a really good story on it. I'm so pleased to say that a new budding company called good energy and Paul band managed to get together, and I was so proud. I couldn't have been more proud if I was the actual matchmaker because in essence, Mr. Speaker, I kind of was who brought these folks together in that community. They came up, and they saw what the issues and challenges were. The new company wanted to have unfettered access to resources, having good, skilled tradespeople to be there so that in the next wave we're not having to seek outside of our provincial borders for that. The Paul band themselves had a bunch of folks that have skilled trades, but with the rapid phase-out of the coal-fired plants out at Keephills, they're no longer doing the shutdowns. They're no longer working on the capital projects, so they were in some need and distress of having that as well.

The conditions of the roads in the First Nations are substandard. I've seen a lot of bush roads when we were punching in leases that have actually been better than that. As I'm riding in the truck with one of the councillors, Faron Bull, and one of his advisers and former chief, I'm asking him, "What's going on with your roads?" "Well we don't have the money to maintain the roads. We have over 55 kilometres and \$150,000 a year to do it." We started talking about rural crime and some of the issues taking place. They said that a judge had actually paid attention to that, too, because 30 per cent of his caseload is coming from that one reservation. When I ask the councillors very openly: "What is the issue? What's the problem?" "Well, we used to have good roads. We used to have better access for ambulances. We used to have a constable here on the reserve, and he helped keep the bad guys out. They helped deal with the crime."

They know they have issues. So what good energy and the Paul band managed to do was to come up with a model where Paul band owns 5 per cent of this new company. Good energy is going to put a new trade resource centre right on that facility, right taking place, so they'll have unfettered access to train these people up, and they have part ownership. They should have an opportunity to see an income flux of about \$3 million to \$4 million dollars per year within the first year. That will pay for the roads. That will pay for some of the services. That will help fight the crime, and it will keep those bright-eyed, bushy-tailed little kids that are coming out of that schooling system – they're so hopeful and wanting for life. They're going to have an opportunity. They're going to have that pride of ownership that it's going to be their company, something that they've done. This isn't about thinking that they're ready for it and giving out little programs. This is about genuine consultation, genuine partnerships, and setting aside all of those bad legislative items that have been put in the past to keep us at odds. As that one former chief said: with him with the warpaint on and me with the business suit fighting in the hallway.

Bill 14 does that. Minister, thank you so much for your initiative, for your folks for doing that. I know that it's going to help the other communities out there in the province. I know that the Alexis band, for example, has done wonderful things with that business-minded community. The chief there is very forward thinking. Backwoods Energy is a fine, shining example of how they can be involved and engaged in industry and bring those benefits back to the community. This is going to give them that next step, and it's going to help industry be able to have fruitful consultation and to not have impediments in the project. From the bottom of my heart and our constituents', sir, thank you so much.

Our government was elected on the promises that we would get all Albertans working again, and we mean all Albertans. When we're sitting there and we're having these conversations about

Treaty 6 – in my neck of the woods Treaty 6, the emblem on that has two people shaking hands. That's what we have with this bill. That's going back to basics, back to where we started, a genuine handshake. It means a hell of a – a heck of a lot to me. Sorry; I was almost unparliamentary. It means a heck of a lot to me, and I know it means the same for those folks. We can make this handshake, we can make these deals work, and everyone gets with it.

Thank you, sir.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Seeing the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain standing.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for giving such a heartfelt speech about the impact that, you know, Bill 14 can have, especially in the three indigenous nations that currently exist in his riding: Alexander, Alexis, and Paul band. I know the member has extensive experience managing large industrial construction projects, and he has a widespread amount of experience that really took him all over Canada, looking at different environments. I was hoping, perhaps, that he could elaborate a little bit about, based upon his experience, what he thinks Bill 14 can do when it comes to making an impact on indigenous communities right across Canada and specifically on the three groups that are located within his riding, specifically Paul band First Nation which was, obviously, as everyone knows in this House, drastically affected by the accelerated coal phase-out.

Mr. Getson: Thank you for your question on that. Yeah. I do have that experience of sitting there. One of the fundamental changes here is that normally when we're doing consultations, it's within a given traditional territory. What happens is, essentially, you put people on a leash. You can only go so far around your proximities or your circles, and you can only stay within your given areas or traditional lands. What this bill does: it unshackles that. It essentially allows, from my understanding of it, and through, you know, the dialogues with these other groups, that they can do any work within the province.

4:50

For the Paul band, for example, they're not waiting or they're not stuck in their own backyard just for that job at Keephills. They literally are going to be part owners, and under this program they might be one of the first few that get through the hopper to be able to partake in this. They can actually go up to Fort McMurray or they can have some other joint-venture partners with other First Nations in those areas. They can actively participate with one or more different companies. It actually gives them the chance that we've all had. It gives them that financial backstop and wherewithal to be taken seriously. As industry we're going to gobble this up. This is wonderful because before we had been boxed in as well.

There's always the true consultation that you need within those territories, and that will never go away. The known traditional lands, that will not go away. But the ability to facilitate business, the ability to have revenue generated off your traditional lands, the ability to work collaboratively with other groups off your lands: this is huge. This is absolutely huge. Once you get that buy-in and that understanding, you can basically tailor-make each one of these little projects, if you would, and you can look at what the needs are within that one community. As an example for Paul band, then, good energy is going to look at their emergent needs because that's how they're going to facilitate this one model. By the same token, they could have another company off to the side, another silo, if you would, with another one of the First Nations groups. Dependent on what their needs are, you can tailor-make that project again, have

them participating, and the company they come up with, that they form, is subtly different. Again, we're allowing that flexibility, like we said, to allow them the opportunities and have that ingenuity to come up with the new models.

This is huge, and that's why I was so ecstatic about it before, Member Turton, because this literally gives the opportunity for all those folks to have that unbridled freedom, that entrepreneurship to get ahead. It's not a hand up. This is definitely levelling the playing field like we've talked about. This is an opportunity for all Albertans, and this is our chance to make it right. That's why I'm so excited about it.

Thank you for that question.

The Acting Speaker: I'll just remind members to ensure that they do not use the specific names of members in their comments.

There are still about 60 seconds left on this 29(2)(a) if anybody would like to speak to that.

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

Mr. Toor: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House of an incredibly important piece of legislation that is currently before us. Bill 14 is an integral part of our agenda.

Since this government was elected, we have been busy fulfilling our commitment to Albertans of getting this province back on track to economic recovery. We want to see as many people as possible in this province with a good job that allows them to support their families and give back to their communities. Part of this commitment is to improve the lives of indigenous people in Alberta. Our indigenous brothers and sisters have suffered in the past and continue to see intergenerational struggles as a result of this today. We do not stray away from the difficult conversations about the mistreatment that has previously occurred, and we believe as a province that we have a moral obligation to do better as we strive for reconciliation.

Unemployment among some First Nations is at a high rate. The natural resource industry has provided rewarding and consistent work for many people in this province. We believe that there is a more significant role that indigenous people in Alberta can play in the development of natural resources, with a benefit that will last for generations. The indigenous people of Alberta have been stewards of the land for millennia. They learned to live with, protect, and use this province's abundant natural resources to ensure that their communities would prosper, from food to clothing to medicine. We believe that this knowledge should be utilized. That is why we set out to listen to indigenous Albertans about how they could be partnered with and supported in profiting from our natural resources. Our government has consulted with indigenous groups and business leaders far and wide across the province. We hosted eight engagement sessions with about 200 participants that helped craft this legislation. I want to thank those who took part in the meetings which informed the development of this bill.

Previous governments have taken an approach to indigenous Albertans. We're thinking differently. We want to put some of that power back into their hands. Today we are welcoming indigenous Albertans to the table as stakeholders in future natural resource exploration and development.

Bill 14 proposes the creation of an Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, which is called AIOC. The AIOC will bridge the gap between indigenous groups wanting to be commercial partners in the natural resource sector. This will include up to \$1 billion in loan guarantees. It will also allow the AIOC to leverage other financial tools such as equity loans. This is so important because First Nation people living on reserves do not

have property rights like other Canadians. For far too long they have been unable to accumulate capital or mortgage their properties to start up new businesses.

It is time to harness the entrepreneurial spirit of Alberta's First Peoples and ensure that they have the means to put food on their tables and a roof over their heads. We do not just want to gain the money needed to buy into significant projects. We always hear in consultation with indigenous communities that they wish to be more self-sufficient. What we are proposing through the AIOC is a partnership that will allow communities to find new revenue streams which can enable them to be independent and to not have to rely on federal money.

Mr. Speaker, this government believes in moving past symbolic gestures. They do have their place, but the time for action is now. During the last election Chief Billy Morin alongside Premier Kenney said that the plan for the Alberta aboriginal opportunities corporation was a step in the right direction and that nobody has ever stepped up to the plate and put their money where their mouth is. Today we are committing to putting our money where our mouth is. What you see before you is a demonstration of a government that keeps its promise. This proposal is the first of its kind in Canada and further establishes our province as a leader in this country when it comes to natural resource development. I am proud to say that I believe when indigenous people benefit, all Albertans benefit.

Bill 14 sets the standard and tone for this government's interaction with indigenous communities. This is a tone of consultation and respect which recognizes the rich cultural practices and traditions which are practised to this day while looking forward with a commitment to creating a more positive future. As a government we talk about reducing red tape, and we champion the importance of small business and entrepreneurship. This bill puts indigenous Albertans and their hopes and aspirations at the forefront of our economic agenda. Our proposal is neither left nor right wing. It is about doing the right thing where in the past there has been wrong.

Our province has a very bright future ahead. In the spirit of equity we wish to see all Albertans benefit. This means indigenous Albertans. I share the excitement of many Albertans and indigenous communities in supporting this bill. I understand that from time to time we will have disagreement in this House on how we achieve what we believe is best for this province. Today I hope that my colleagues across this Chamber will see this opportunity that we have before us in Bill 14 and will also share their support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:00

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak on this bill? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has the floor.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have worked hard recently in this House to get Alberta back on track to economic recovery. That is the goal of everyone in this House, I believe. We've made sure that this country and the world know that we are proudly open for business. As remarkable as the strides we have made since forming government are, what is even more remarkable are the opportunities inherent in better fiscal stewardship and ongoing economic development, full and broadly spoken. These opportunities need to be available to every Albertan. Every Albertan.

As much as we want to be able to say that one approach works for all or that one policy or one decision can solve the majority of

difficulties we face in getting this province back on track and Albertans back to work, we also know that this isn't the reality that everyone unilaterally experiences. We know that there are different barriers, considerations, practices, and perspectives that we need to consider when we talk about economic development and economic advancement. Our economic strategy, as a government that believes in the value of everyone who calls Alberta home, must consider the broad range of experiences that make us all who we are. Though we are bound together by grit, sweat, and a whole lot of get 'er done spirit, we cannot regret to ask about or advance the important qualities that make us unique and different or place us on different paths on our journeys to success in this great province.

More importantly, we cannot ignore discussions regarding individual or group participation and involvement in our energy industry, specifically, that may be difficult to face or address such as reconciling with indigenous individuals and groups across Alberta. It would be easy to say that everyone has had access to the same doors of economic opportunity in this province and in this province's energy sector. However, what's easy to say isn't often the truth, and it certainly isn't when we consider our past relationships with indigenous groups and the ongoing work of reconciliation that is necessary in, amongst, and as a part of our developing relationships between indigenous and nonindigenous Albertans.

This is why I believe the necessity of Bill 14, proudly brought forward by our Minister of Indigenous Relations, and the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation are so essential. I cannot think of another bill that would be as important or as significant to the beginning of this session and the beginning of another chapter in this government's history and, of course, the future of our province. We are setting the tone of how we see Alberta and how we value the indigenous participation and partnerships through making this bill our top priority in this session and in this sitting. Indigenous peoples across this province deserve a government – their government – that will work to make reconciliation more than a buzzword repeated through government documents. I know that certainly this government will be one that keeps our promises and our word to our indigenous partners. Promises made and promises kept apply to all in this great province.

This bill does not focus on what divides us, but it acknowledges the incredible opportunity and incredibly important cultural, traditional, and intergenerational factors that our indigenous communities carry with them when we discuss economic opportunities in our natural resource sector. We are no longer paying lip service to the importance of indigenous involvement in Alberta's outstanding natural resources sector, Mr. Speaker. This is important to all of us, and this bill gives us a concrete road map to furthering indigenous involvement and bolstering indigenous interests in our natural resource economy. That is the goal of this bill.

We are not only opening the door to natural resource development for indigenous groups in this province but giving concrete reasons and paths and supports as to why they should take a chance and walk with us on a path back to the Alberta advantage. The value of engaging indigenous Albertans in our natural resource sector cannot be understated. As stewards and partners in developing our natural resource, we owe it to them to consider how they may have been unable to access economic development opportunities in the past. This bill addresses some of those challenges. We do so in order to better provide opportunities for them to build a brighter future for all.

Mr. Speaker, empowerment doesn't begin at success, nor does success come without failure. We've all tested it, we've all tasted it, and we will undoubtedly face it in the future, but that is not a

reason to not pursue it. In the past we may have failed to fully consider and anticipate the needs of our indigenous partners. We may have failed to bolster an environment where inclusion is just as important as development success, and we may have failed to make it known to interested indigenous groups that their investment and participation are both wanted and sincerely valued. As difficult as this past might be for some of us to recall, we cannot hide our history out of shame. We must face the challenges of the past and change the future.

There have been many times when indigenous groups wanting to participate in our booming resource sector have been shut out or excluded from the table. That is not good enough. The only way we can rectify these past misdeeds and mismanagement, this past oversight is to address it in the open and take positive steps together to rectify this relationship and develop it further for the future. Mr. Speaker, I thank our minister for taking these steps for us. Today we are boldly declaring that we are welcoming indigenous partners to the table and further establishing Alberta as a leader in cultivating investments from indigenous groups in our natural resource sector. This is the shared economy which we envision.

I would like to thank those that took part in the various engagement sessions, as have been referenced by some of my colleagues, regarding the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. It was a busy summer, I know, for our minister. Without hearing the very real and lived experiences of aspiring indigenous energy sector partners and entrepreneurs, this bill would not have been able to come to fruition, and the establishment of this revolutionary and, dare I say, evolutionary initiative wouldn't be possible.

It's difficult to accept that indigenous partners have in some cases been left in the dark for so long regarding their capacities and capabilities and eagerness to contribute to the sustainable and innovative development of our energy sector, but this bill provides a clear path forward and a clear method by which we can engage our indigenous partners to the greatest extent of their involvement. It gives them the tools to participate. We have an obligation and a duty to the indigenous peoples who have called this land home for hundreds of years before many of us arrived, the so-called pioneers in this province. Well, let me tell you that those pioneers were here already.

We have a responsibility as legislators to ensure that we're giving each and every individual and group in this province the greatest opportunity and the greatest opportunity available to succeed, Mr. Speaker. We have said that we will help everybody to reach their full potential. This bill empowers indigenous communities to reach their full potential as a committed partner in this venture, not just as a committed partner but with a commitment from our government to make this something that is important to all Albertans. Through decisively supporting indigenous co-ownership and codevelopment of natural resource development projects, we are fulfilling our obligation to collaborate with and assist those who came here before us. We are also developing capacities for intergenerational success, to change the conversation going forward. This is unmistakable and will have an impact on generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, when every single person in our province is able to succeed, to reach that full potential, we will have a stronger and more vibrant province for all. This includes righting past wrongs and ensuring that Albertans, including the many indigenous peoples who've called this land home, are able to fully participate and enjoy the economic advantages – yes, that Alberta advantage, which we are rebuilding – that we can offer them as part of this vision.

Mr. Speaker, I had the great opportunity over the last couple of years – and I know that he stood with the minister today – to spend some time with Calvin Helin and to learn more about the Eagle Spirit energy corridor, which I believe is a great opportunity for us

finally to break the logjam and to get our products, our resources to market. It's no longer good enough for us to have corporations develop ideas and plans and projects and investments and then consult with the First Nations people, the indigenous peoples of this land. What impressed me the most with the vision that I saw from Calvin was that they wanted a true partnership. They wanted to be co-proponents – with Canadians, with Albertans, with people in British Columbia – of developing a plan and a vision for economic prosperity.

5:10

I truly believe that that co-propoundment, that partnership, is the only way that we can actually get these projects done. We've tried and we've tried, and we've been stymied by various levels of government and environmental groups, but to stand shoulder to shoulder with the indigenous peoples of this country and not just the Eagle Spirit energy corridor but the national energy corridor, which we also hear conversations about, which is essential – to me, the pipelines that will be part of this initiative are the railway of the new millennium. Where would Canada be if we did not have that railway? Well, I'd say that 100 years from now they will be saying: where would Canada be if we did not get these pipelines built and the other projects attached to the Alberta indigenous opportunities company? Mr. Speaker, make no mistake; this is not about doing something for someone. It's about doing something with someone, with the indigenous peoples of this great province, and we will get it done.

This bill has been a long time coming, Mr. Speaker. I encourage everyone in this House unanimously to be part of history through supporting this groundbreaking piece of legislation, supporting our minister in his hard work, supporting our government and the people of this Legislature in actually making this happen, passing this bill quickly, and getting to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has risen.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just enjoying this discussion here on Bill 14. I guess I just wanted to encourage the member to maybe continue on a little bit along the vein of the opportunity and how this bill creates so much more opportunity for the First Nations in this province. He talked also about the minister and how much work he's put in and how many miles he's put on, consulting on this and making sure that this is what First Nations people want and what Albertans want and what the industry wants in Alberta. He talked also about the partnership that this makes with the people of Alberta and the First Nations.

You know, our commitment in the last election had a lot to do with jobs, economy, and getting investment back in Alberta. I guess he could also maybe comment on that, too, how this bill fulfills that vision and our commitment to Albertans that we brought forward in our campaign. I think this opportunity is again – I guess that's what it's all about. This is an opportunity for growth and an opportunity for jobs and employment and bringing people up in their standard of living. I'd just like to hear the member's comments along those veins.

Thanks.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question, the opportunity to speak a bit more on this

great opportunity. There are a few things that I'd like to share. Number one, I think, is that, again – and I think it was mentioned by some of the other hon. members in the House – this is not about a handout; this is about a hand up. This is about working together to ensure that we provide the resources and the supports, sometimes in a world that is not always balanced, not always equitable, not always equal or fair, but we can create that opportunity. That opportunity is only that: it's an opportunity to run with this and to be full participants in rebuilding the Alberta advantage. I know that everybody in this House actually is focused on that opportunity, to bring back the Alberta advantage.

I often say that the Alberta advantage means something different. It means something to most Albertans I speak to, almost every Albertan I speak to. When you say the words "Alberta advantage," something is conjured up in their mind, in their memory, or just in their emotions about what that means. It might be the health care that they were assisted in. It might be the education they received. It might be the opportunities, the entrepreneurial opportunities, that were presented to them. It might be something that happened to their family where there were supports in place because of the resources that were generated through the economy that we were so proud to have built in this province and which we are driving forward on.

When we embrace our indigenous people through the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation and provide that pathway – that's all it is; it's a pathway, a path which can be chosen – we open up the opportunity for that path to be addressed, to be taken. That path has not existed in the way it should have, and today we have an opportunity – and the sooner we can pass this bill, I would say, the better – to move that, to create that path ahead of us with this as the green light at the end of that path, the way that they can walk that path strongly, bravely, with an opportunity and with a vision not just for the future of this province but for themselves, for their families, and for generations to come.

Again, thank you to the member for the opportunity to speak to this. I think that this bill is more than what it appears to be on the surface. It is an Alberta indigenous opportunities company, but it is a vision for inclusion, a vision for participation, a vision for us to work together as Team Alberta as we move forward, all of us in this room and beyond this room, those that we represent in the 87 constituencies across this great province. This is a pathway for Team Alberta to fire on all cylinders as we move forward and to bring everybody into an opportunity. This is not the end of it. This is the beginning of it. Let's hope this is the beginning of this great path which opens far and wide and re-creates and renews the Alberta advantage.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Thirty seconds left on 29(2)(a).

Seeing no one, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie has the floor.

Mrs. Allard: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to rise and speak today in support of Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called all Canadians to action. We have, each and every one of us, been called to walk the path of reconciliation with all the indigenous peoples in our great country. Specifically, Canadians are called to fulfill our moral obligation to walk the path of economic reconciliation and to ensure that indigenous peoples have access to jobs, training, and educational opportunities and that indigenous communities participate in the prosperity derived from economic development projects.

Too often our indigenous people have been disenfranchised and left out of the prosperity pie. That must change. It is a challenge to fulfill our moral obligations to ensure that indigenous communities are partners in the prosperity of our federation. But, as the saying goes, if it was easy, everyone would do it. It is easy for governments to pay lip service to their moral duties. It requires a concerted effort to reconcile the past and move forward as partners with indigenous peoples. Bill 14 is one tangible step in that direction. I am proud to say that that is the action our government has introduced, and no other government, not territorial, not provincial, nor federal, has matched our government's commitment to real reconciliation.

Our Conservative government has accepted this responsibility. We have accepted the challenge to move beyond symbolic gestures and into real action towards reconciliation and change for the future. As we promised during the election, our Conservative government has put forward a plan towards economic reconciliation. This plan does not involve government stepping in to achieve reconciliation because reconciliation cannot be achieved by government alone. It cannot be achieved with a partnership of just the government and indigenous peoples. Reconciliation requires indigenous peoples, Canadians, and government to come together and partner in moving forward.

This bill before us today cements an economic partnership with government and with the indigenous peoples of our province so that each of us and each indigenous person and community can become full partners in prosperity, truly realizing the Alberta advantage. As partners in the prosperity of our province and our federation indigenous peoples will have the support they need to develop their local economies and their local communities.

We will ensure that our indigenous communities have the opportunity to participate in the natural resource development all across our province. Alberta has vast natural resources, from the oil sands in Fort McMurray and the Montney formation near my constituency of Grande Prairie to the vast forests which stretch across the north of our province. We in Alberta have an abundance of natural resources. Natural resource development affords our communities the ability to thrive even with the higher cost of living, and it is time we extend this opportunity and encourage indigenous partnership in our natural resource development.

Through the creation of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation we will facilitate indigenous participation in the development of our natural resources going forward. With this corporation we are reserving \$1 billion for indigenous communities to become partners in prosperity, a support that opens the door to capital projects and prosperity that would never have been feasible without this backstop.

5:20

Many indigenous communities experience interruptions in the most basic of services and sometimes lack those basic services altogether. Most Albertans, like myself, take these basic services like reliable electricity and safe drinking water for granted. Indigenous communities in our province must enjoy the same standards as the rest of the province, and the development that will be facilitated through this corporation will provide a baseline level of economic activity for our indigenous communities to develop the services other areas take for granted. These communities will be able to participate in the development of the vast wealth that comes from the land their ancestors walked for generations.

The indigenous peoples of Alberta have the desire, the workforce, and the motivation to become partners in our resource prosperity, and the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation provides the opportunity to realize that partnership and provides a chance at economic reconciliation. It links our prosperity together

so that when Alberta wins, we all win together. Indeed, the indigenous peoples were Alberta's first entrepreneurs and built strong communities that guided future generations. That spirit lingers still within the indigenous people of Alberta, and if we give them the opportunity, they will manifest it again.

Many indigenous communities are already beginning to take that spirit and apply it to resource development. That is why we have already acted to help bridge the gap and provide an opportunity to reignite that entrepreneurial spirit. Our government has set up \$10 million in an indigenous litigation fund so that the voices of indigenous people fighting for their right to develop and profit from natural resources will be heard in court when others are trying to shut them down.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to act on reconciliation, not just to talk about it. It is time to uphold our moral duty to move toward reconciliation fully. Today, by supporting this bill for the establishment of the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, I support our platform commitment to truly make life better for all Albertans. I wanted to thank the minister now for his leadership on this important initiative and for leading the way for our caucus to reach out and really, truly consult with the indigenous peoples of our province. Now I ask the members of this Assembly to commit themselves to walking the path of economic reconciliation by cementing a partnership in prosperity with our province's indigenous peoples by voting in support of this bill and supporting the development of this corporation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, I see under 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has risen.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her heartfelt statement. I'm really interested, you know, as I talk to my colleagues from both sides of the House, across this province. It always amazes me: their own personal connections with the indigenous communities across this province, the personal stories that they have to tell, some of the opportunities they've had to live and work in the communities with the indigenous populations of their area, to work with them in partnership, to work with them in fun and adventure and education, all the different things. When I hear these stories, it really, to me, brings an opportunity to learn about this province. As I hear the stories from the minister with respect to the number of meetings he held in the summer, which I'm jealous about – I wish I was there to join him for those meetings and the opportunities to learn and to share culture and history and the joy of living in this great province.

When I see that opportunity, I'm always reminded to ask the questions and to find out more, so I'd like to ask the member if she has any personal stories, some anecdotal stories about some opportunities she's had in her community to really feel that sense of partnership, which maybe had been stymied but where she can see that that might be an opportunity as we move forward for the Alberta indigenous opportunities company to create those kinds of opportunities right in her own community.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I do have multiple personal stories. I grew up in Whitehorse, Yukon, adjacent to a number of indigenous communities, but I think the story that I'll focus on today is a business-related story from our early days in the franchise system that my husband and I worked in. One of our first employees was a member of an indigenous community – we lived on the west coast

of British Columbia – and he rose quickly through the ranks. He was our star baker, and then he became our manager and our senior leader outside of my husband and myself within our small organization at that time. He showed such incredible skill and desire to move up in the world. He had so many aspirations.

I would say that the one thing that held him back was his lack of opportunity, his lack of capacity to go back to school, his lack of funding to invest in something. But he had truly an entrepreneurial spirit, and he was exactly the kind of person that would have been perfect to invest in the business that we were participating in. I believe that if he'd had access to something like this opportunity corporation, he would be his own entrepreneur today. Unfortunately, that opportunity was not available to him at the time, but I believe that with this opportunity, going forward there'll be many people, as you said before and as many others have said in this House, that will get a hand up instead of a handout. It will really and truly change the trajectory for generations to come, not only in Alberta but in Canada. I'm very, very excited about it.

Thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we have a little over a minute and a half left on 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill proper? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and pleasure to speak here on Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. This government is proud to be working with indigenous leaders on the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation, and it is about time that the Alberta government took concrete steps to improve the well-being of indigenous Albertans and to consult with indigenous Albertans on a regular basis. Unlike the previous government, who did nothing to integrate Alberta's oil and gas prosperity with indigenous communities, this government will work hand in hand with indigenous groups to restore dignity and opportunity to indigenous Albertans and the thousands of communities they live in. Our government is dedicated to partnering with Alberta indigenous communities and building economic and social well-being.

The Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation allocates a billion dollars in loan guarantees to support aboriginal coal operation and financial participation in major resource development because it is a moral obligation to help our First Nations benefit from the resources that lie below the ground that their ancestors inhabited thousands of years ago.

While we're looking forward to this partnership, the previous NDP government took every step it could to undercut and destroy this province's oil and gas sector. We are a resource-based economy, and the previous government did not embrace that fact. You know, there are a lot of questions about the previous government. Why did they kick puppies? Why do they hate children? Why do they snatch walking canes away from old people? So many questions, but we can only just talk about ourselves, and we know that things like the job-killing carbon tax was a reckless ideological policy that set this province on track for \$100 billion in debt. Fortunately, Albertans chose right. They chose the United Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, putting this province in debt only hurts the communities that the previous government claimed to support. Let me assure this Chamber and all Albertans that cleaning up our balance sheet while partnering with indigenous groups will be a huge step in the right direction for Alberta and our essential oil and gas industry.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I come from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. If we go strictly by my constituency lines, I truly have all

the major players in the oil sands industry, and not only that, with your Syncrudes and your Suncors and your CNRLs, Teck is looking at a huge operation up there as well as all of their expansions. I also have within my region the Fort McKay First Nation, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. I have the Mikisew Cree First Nation. I also have the Fort McKay Métis, the Fort Chipewyan Métis, and the Fort McMurray Métis.

Let me tell you something about these indigenous groups in my region. They all have a fairly good life right now. They have a decent amount of prosperity. In my previous life working in emergency services, I worked in places like Ponoka and Peace River, where I was exposed to indigenous communities that weren't so fortunate, that didn't have that involvement with industry, that by all means of assessing a community would be considered quite poverty stricken. When I look at the communities in my region, they are quite prosperous, quite frankly, and it's because they work with our oil industry. They have the ability to talk and get support in education and skills, trades and are able to work and run businesses in conjunction with these oil companies.

You know, for a group like, say, Fort McKay First Nation, it all started out with Syncrude needing some transportation like a taxi service on their sites. They worked with the Fort McKay First Nation to actually own that and take that over and manage it. That was a first step, the foot in the door for Fort McKay First Nation to really be embraced by the oil companies, and that prosperity led to the people in that community having more financial stability so that they could send their children to universities and colleges and schools as well as build a proper house with all the amenities.

5:30

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I was working in Ponoka and I had to go to Maskwacis, the houses that I went into, quite honestly, were torn up, okay? They tore out the floorboards, they would tear off their oak cupboards, and they were burning those in the fireplace so that they would have heat, okay? I don't see any of that up north. I don't see that desperation in them. They have adequate access to all sorts of good things that we have, that we love in our first-world nation that most of us are lucky enough to have.

These groups are really enjoying the fact that we have a new government in place, a government that is looking at them and taking them seriously. I've been fortunate. I've had some ministers – the Minister of Indigenous Relations, the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Transportation – that were all kind enough to go all the way up to Fort Chipewyan. Let me tell you about those groups up there. They were so pleased to see these individuals. They recognized the great work that they were doing, that they're willing to work with them, and that the future was going to be bright. I want to thank those three individuals for coming up and engaging them and embracing them, and we all look forward to that engagement. It's going to be excellent.

They said as much to me, and they're very, very proud. To that, they also started bragging to me afterwards about some of their potential investments that they have available to them with new groups like Teck Resources coming with their new mine and some expansions that are going on with CNRL and others. When we were talking about this Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, they were very ecstatic and very enthusiastic. They saw this as another opportunity to leverage their know-how and their skills and share that with not only other First Nations across the province but also to help themselves as well continue to get that hand up. Again, it's a hand up and not a handout.

These are the things that this government is trying to do, that this government is trying to accomplish, that by teaching people how to fish, we don't have to just give them the fish anymore, that they can

do these things on their own. When you talk to the individuals, that is very much what they want. I've had people over the years come to me, friends who live in town, who are quite proud that they are working at the oil companies and not getting a federal grant for a house. There's pride in that and pride in refusing federal money for such things as a home because they had the ability to build their own home and manage that home, and they had the ability, because they're working at these oil companies, to send their children to universities and colleges and get that other education so that they don't have to go back to lower, more manual labour, if you will. They're trying to escape that cycle of poverty that we sometimes see in indigenous communities.

The communities in my region are excelling. They're aggressive. They want to grow more, they want to become more independent, and this government – and they recognize this – is the government that can do it for them. Don't even ask me about what they think of the previous government. Major disappointment there, but that's a whole other story. I digress.

As I was saying, Albertans did elect us to fix the previous government's mess one policy at a time. Again, this government, our government, was pleased to host eight engagement sessions between July 10 and August 8 this year, which engaged almost 200 participants. Developing this plan is just the first step in rebuilding a damaged relationship between the government of Alberta and indigenous groups that, again, the previous government just perpetuated and worsened.

The ability of indigenous groups to provide adequate security to financial lenders is a significant barrier in their ability to access capital and the capacity to develop or invest in major resource projects, and it really does vary widely across all the indigenous communities. Again, the communities in my region are very fortunate in that they were at the beginning of all this, and many First Nations I think see the benefits of working with industry, of working with the government, and we have the right people in place, with these great ministers, to push that forward. For that, I thank them again so much.

This government will work out the challenges between the energy sector and the indigenous stakeholders, again, to ensure that everyone benefits from our energy potential. All stakeholders, including our indigenous groups, are being given an opportunity to voice their opinions, their concerns, and questions. Again, that was epitomized by the fact that I had three fantastic ministers show up in Fort Chipewyan and embrace and talk and engage with these community leaders.

Again, participants are going to be far and wide. They all want to join in and work with our indigenous groups. Syncrude, Suncor, ATCO, and EPCOR also have been joining these engagement sessions. All industry wants to work with our indigenous groups because we all have the same thing as goal: we want Canada to prosper and for that prosperity to be for everyone, not just certain left-wing elitists, certainly.

Alberta is the land of opportunity for everyone, and this government is looking forward to fulfilling that promise and building an Alberta for everyone. That, again, includes our indigenous communities. We're excited to be working with coalitions: representatives from Eagle Spirit Energy, the First Nations Major Projects Coalition, Project Reconciliation, the Iron Coalition, the Western Indigenous Pipeline Group, and the Fort McKay Mikisew Cree tank farm project. Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that there are many, many more projects on the horizon, but that said, this fall's election here federally will really impact a lot of that, what goes on here. But, again, that's another discussion.

These groups have all offered extremely valuable insight during our engagement sessions and will continue to be valuable partners

with this government in the coming years. We will not stand idly by and let these Albertans fall through the cracks. We have the responsibility as legislators to advance the prospects of all Albertans. We were elected with a huge mandate to get Albertans back to work. Working with our indigenous communities is a part of this mandate. And righting the wrongs of the previous government: well, we're trying to do that for everything, really, so it's a step at a time, and this is just one file in so many.

Mr. Speaker, it is about developing a safer future for indigenous communities as well, because when these communities prosper, when they all have money, when they can afford the basics like in Maslow's hierarchy of shelter, food, and then getting the basics of education and everything else, it just brings them all up and enables them not to get into certain situations where they find themselves getting dragged down, back into poverty. Again, this benefits everyone. This really benefits a group who have not been able to necessarily benefit from such resources, but by working with this government, we can certainly do so.

There are a lot of things that we have to develop in these communities, Mr. Speaker, and they've been doing it on their own. As an example, again, in my community the First Nations work with the oil sands companies to build things like – believe it or not – facilities for their seniors. They have a brand new facility that they built in conjunction with oil companies so that they can have their seniors stay in Fort McKay and not have to travel all the way to Fort McMurray. Having those elders in their community teaching their young ones is a fantastic thing. The knowledge gets passed on. These are great things. These are the things that we want to see in our indigenous communities. We want to see that embracing of our youth with our seniors. It's fantastic to see how they've taken these challenges and work with the oil companies and get the amenities that we all really, truly desire.

5:40

We do recognize that there are structural challenges that many communities face, and again we're going to help them with this indigenous opportunities corporation. This will provide some great supports for our indigenous people. This is about teaching people how to fish and not just giving them the fish. It is about a hand up and not a handout, and it is a reflection of what a good government is all about, a good government that creates the policies and the environment that promotes and encourages business and the citizens to work together for the benefit of all. It's not about imposing rules and regulations on people, making them follow them to the T, and "Oh, this rule and regulation impairs this, so let's add more rules and regulations." That's why we have the minister of red tape, to reduce these kinds of things.

Again, there's still so much work to be done, and I believe that we have the right people in charge to get this working. We have 63 amazing people on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that are all working hard and all strongly believe in this. I believe that if there's any government that can do this and work with our indigenous people, it is this government that can do it. [Mr. Yao's speaking time expired] Oh, perfect.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has risen.

Mr. Getson: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to tell us what the future holds. Again, part of it is the contrast that you can see with some of the communities that haven't been able to participate such as the Fort McKay groups. I've had the ability to be up there, interact with those folks, have the time to see how far they've

progressed on those. One example was a gentleman who was actually developing drone technology for flying out and looking at the surveillance in Syncrude and Suncor. Those are some of the stories that I think other folks might want to hear about, to see how far they can go once they have that opportunity, and that are inspiring, quite frankly, for the folks in my community. If you could, please.

Mr. Yao: My good friend, that is a very good question, and unfortunately I don't have enough time to go into real detail as to these things that you asked about. Certainly, things like this will help us, hopefully, to get things like pipelines built and allow more of our indigenous communities to the south to also be engaged in these processes and get this needed infrastructure built so that we have a local source of energy and not import products from Iraq and Iran and the Middle East and Venezuela and, heaven forbid, the United States. Again, these are all opportunities that our indigenous communities will gladly, I think, embrace. I think they see the light. I think they have the understanding. Again, all they have to do is look up north to the amazing constituency of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and just see the prosperity there.

Again, so many things that you asked there truly depend on this next election, this federal election that's coming up in two weeks. I should probably not say too many details of what my friends up north have told me. Certainly, whoever gets into government will create enough confidence for companies to invest and build and progress in a lot of these expansions and new plants, but if the wrong government gets in, I'm very, very afraid when I see oil executives prepared to sell their homes in my community. It's a precarious line that we face right now. I hope that Canadians across our nation are going to recognize the benefits and the fact that we are a resource-based economy and that we have to use these things so that we can get everyone out of poverty and help lead the world in prosperity.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, two more minutes under 29(2)(a).

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill proper? I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to be back in the House. Welcome back to everybody. You know, this bill, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, is one of those times when I'm really glad that we're back in the House. There is much good that we can do in this House, and sometimes there's much that we can do that just seems like we're spinning our wheels and maybe in the process not always getting along with each other. But I am very pleased to be back and to be able to stand here and speak to this bill, the very first bill of this session, and I want to thank the minister for bringing it forward.

When I first ran and was elected to the Alberta Legislature, in 2015, like I believe just about everybody in this House, all the MLAs in this House, I ran because I wanted a Legislature that would listen and would act in what I perceived to be the best interests of just your average, everyday Albertan. It was my privilege to be elected to this Assembly. Over the past five years that I've been here as a part of this institution, it's been my privilege to be a voice for my constituents and to address each of the bills that have been brought before this House and to help fashion a way forward for the people of Alberta through this Legislature.

Hopefully, we've done that. We've been able to go back to our constituents, and we've been able to seek out their vision for the kind of Alberta that they would like to have and been able to act on

that. Now, as a Christian – in the Bible, in Proverbs 29:18, it says, “Where there is no vision, the people [will] perish.” I believe that it’s one of the primary jobs of leadership, one of the primary jobs of our Premier, one of the primary jobs of our cabinet and for ourselves as Members of this Legislative Assembly to provide vision and leadership for the people of Alberta.

I remember the first time that I heard about this idea. It was just an idea then, this idea that would eventually become Bill 14. It was one of those rare times in my life when the suggested idea, the vision that’s expressed in Bill 14 for moving forward, just clicked, and I just went: “Oh, yeah. That’s right. That’s how we do it. That’s how we go forward.”

I could instantly see where the idea of creating an indigenous opportunity fund would answer so many of the problems and questions that I believe that we as Albertans were struggling with. How do we ensure that Alberta’s First Nations were actually full partners in this Alberta that we want to share and live together in? How could we provide a hand up for people that have too often struggled to overcome the many historical obstacles that have been placed in their path? How do we ensure that we as a wider Alberta society are partners in prosperity with all of the diversity of the people that make up this great province? How do we ensure that Alberta’s First Nations people are active participants and choice-makers in the decisions that are going to affect them as they move forward into the future of this province? How do we get past the rhetoric and the symbolic gestures to meaningfully impact the very real problems that the First Nations Albertans in my constituency and across this province face on a daily basis?

In addressing these very real needs and the needs of this province, how do we make sure that we have access, for instance, to tidewater for our oil and gas? How do we bring First Nations onboard so that they are fully supportive and the beneficiaries of these important resources in Alberta? How do we as a group of legislators provide the meaningful, well-paying jobs for all Albertans, upon which family stability and housing and health and government programs all depend? When I first heard about this idea, all of those things just went boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, and I could see how this could be of benefit to all Albertans but especially to First Nations Albertans.

5:50

When Premier Kenney and the Minister of Indigenous Relations went into my constituency today to the Canadian Energy Museum, which commemorates the growth of Alberta’s energy industry on the site – we met on the very site where Leduc No. 1 was first drilled – my conviction that Bill 14 would help move us forward in answering many of these questions was absolutely confirmed. I listened to both the Premier and to Minister Wilson but especially to the many chiefs that were present this morning as they testified to the soundness of the vision of Bill 14.

Bill 14 gets it right. Bill 14 will create the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation. Bill 14 envisions an Alberta where our indigenous First Nations will have the capacity to access the capital that is necessary for them to be able to invest in our natural resources projects. This Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation will be able to directly or indirectly make a loan or acquire an existing loan. It can issue a loan guarantee or purchase shares or other forms of equity, or it can enter into a joint venture or a partnership.

I heard First Nation leaders today state clearly that Bill 14 is a historic bill, that it will have a meaningful impact on the lives of their people. I can’t think of anything better that we could be doing in this Legislature than providing a meaningful impact that will help the people of this province. That’s our job. That’s what we were

elected to do, and I am so proud of the fact that we can stand here today and talk about Bill 14 and how it’s going to improve the lives of the people of this province.

I heard that never have these communities had an opportunity like this, to access \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support aboriginal co-ownership and financial participation in the major resource development projects of this province. Never before. As a matter of fact, some were saying that never in any other place in the world has this been done. This is indeed a historic piece of legislation that deserves the support of every one of the people in this Legislature.

Bill 14 will create a Crown corporation with a board of directors to manage and supervise the management of the AIOC’s business and affairs, but this board of directors will have meaningful First Nations representation. While the AIOC is at an arm’s-length distance from the government, the government will maintain an appropriate level of oversight. We do have a responsibility to all of the citizens of this province and to the taxpayer dollars that they entrust to us, so it is a right thing, a good thing, to create a corporation that has a board of directors with meaningful First Nations input and participation that will have the oversight of this government to ensure that these dollars are spent in the best interests of all Albertans. We know that a deputy minister will have observer status on the board of directors and that the Minister of Indigenous Relations will have the authority to issue directives to the AIOC, and this is a wise check and balance.

The vision of Bill 14 to create a pathway to prosperity for Alberta’s First Nations will create a provincial economy that works for all Albertans. In my constituency I have the privilege to represent the Enoch First Nation band in the Legislature. This morning Chief Billy Morin of the Enoch reserve spoke to Bill 14 at the Canadian Energy Museum. In that speech he talked about his grandfather’s vision in the 1960s for how the oil and gas industry could help address the many obstacles that blocked the way forward for his people. It is the hope of our government and, I believe, this Legislature that Bill 14 will help to make Chief Morin’s grandfather’s vision a reality.

I know that many of Alberta’s First Nations people have overcome the obstacles of history and have prospered in spite of the government of the day and the law of the day. It is with great satisfaction that I stand here today and speak in support of a bill that will not only help my First Nations constituents access the Alberta economy, but it will help move all Alberta citizens to have access to a prosperous future where all of our citizens have the capacity to benefit from our resource-based projects.

Bill 14 ends the economic model of a culture of dependency, and it replaces it with a vision of individual freedom and capacity-building, which will allow indigenous Albertans to participate as a full partner in this civil society that we call Alberta. Reconciliation can and must take many forms. Economic reconciliation through Bill 14 is just one step forward, but it is an important step forward, and I am proud that it is our government that in partnership with Alberta’s original citizens has taken this step towards a more prosperous future for all Albertans.

Thank you, Minister.

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

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

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations to close debate should he so choose.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Yes. As deputy House leader, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 9, at 9 a.m.

The Acting Speaker: Just to clarify, your intention is to adjourn debate – correct? – not the House.

Mrs. Savage: Yes. My intention is to adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker: Adjourn debate. Okay.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy and Deputy Government House Leader.

Mrs. Savage: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn until tomorrow, October 9, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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