



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 28, 2019

Day 34

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

First Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 28, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Please be seated. Hon. members, we will proceed to *O Canada* in approximately 30 seconds.

Hon. members, I believe that we are ready. I know it may be hard to believe, but I was visiting with the schoolchildren from Eldorado school who will be leading us in *O Canada* just prior to question period, and we got running just a couple of moments late there. I see they have joined us in the gallery, so if you would please rise and join the students from Eldorado school in Drayton Valley in the singing of our national anthem. I invite you to sing in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
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.

Hon. members, thank you for your patience. It was certainly well worth the wait.

Prior to the introduction of visitors and guests this afternoon, I would like to acknowledge the fifth anniversary of the election of a member to this Assembly. I would like to ask the government whip to join me here at the dais as we celebrate his fifth election anniversary. I'll grab a seat so you guys can quickly come while he joins us here.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us this afternoon from our eastern neighbours, former Saskatchewan Party MLA for Kindersley from 2002 to 2007, Mr. Jason Dearborn, and his colleague Peter Voldeng.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us today from the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora are students from St. Vincent. Also in the gallery are hard-working public employees from the Ministry of Service Alberta, and we've already had the opportunity to meet our wonderful anthem singers all the way from Drayton Valley, the grade 4 students from Eldorado school. Thank you to their teachers: Tammy Flett, Jennifer Landers, and Joyce Huska for doing such a

wonderful job. If those who I have mentioned would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

In the Speaker's gallery this afternoon are family members of the Minister of Environment and Parks and the Member for Calgary-Klein. Welcome to the Assembly their brother Shane, his wife, Karen, and possibly the cutest in all of the galleries today, Amelia. Definitely a Nixon.

Also in the gallery this afternoon in recognition of Air Cadet Week, I'm very pleased to welcome air cadets from the greater Edmonton area. Please welcome the air cadets in the gallery.

I'd like to introduce guests of the NDP caucus in the Legislature today. They are Heather Smith, Karen Craik, Danielle Larivee, Cam Westhead, Jane Sustrik, Daphne Wallace. Also, guests of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, from the United Nurses union: Erin Pankratz, Fajar Khan, and Charlotte Bragg. Please welcome them to the Assembly.

Last, but certainly not least, are guests of the Minister of Advanced Education in celebration of Greek independence, or Ochi Day. I am very pleased to welcome guests of the minister. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Ochi Day

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to mark and commemorate October 28. This day is remembered right here in Alberta and around the world as the day in 1940 when the Republic of Greece stood up against Fascist domination. Earlier today I was honoured to stand alongside our Premier and dozens of members of Alberta's Greek community on the steps of the Legislature to mark this important day. Many of them, as you just mentioned, join us here in the gallery alongside my own family.

On the eve of October 28 Mussolini's ambassador to Greece handed the Greek Prime Minister an ultimatum demanding that Greece capitulate to Italian rule. Prime Minister Metaxas replied with a single word: no. This, of course, plunged Greece into the Second World War, and a new front was opened against the Fascist march across Europe. Outgunned and outnumbered, Greek forces stood their ground in defence of the democratic principles that we now take for granted, including freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and conscience. Greek forces staved off the Italian invasion, which would come to be regarded as the first victory against the Axis forces. German forces would ultimately come to the aid of their Italian allies, and on April 18 the Greek Prime Minister chose to take his own life rather than see German forces enter Athens. Nine days later German forces stormed the Acropolis, and one of the greatest symbols of democratic ideals fell into darkness.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, democracy, freedom, and liberty can never be subjugated, and Greece and all of Europe would eventually be freed from oppression. This is why on October 28 we remember those who paid the ultimate price in defence of freedom. They fought to preserve many of the fundamental rights and freedoms that we enjoy today. So let us pay tribute to the sons that never returned home. Let us pay tribute to the homes that were never rebuilt, and let us pay tribute to all whose lives were shattered by the devastation of war. When we commemorate this day, we are reminded of the brave men and women who gave their lives to defend the foundational values and principles we enjoy today. With

a defiant “No,” it was made clear that freedom and liberty would triumph over hate, tyranny, and oppression.

Mr. Speaker, as Alberta’s first MLA of Greek descent, it is my distinct honour and privilege to commemorate October 28 in this Legislature for the very first time.

Thank you.

Members’ Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has a statement to make.

Air Cadets

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Seniors and Housing minister declared Air Cadet Week in Alberta. As our government’s military liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces I am happy to have the opportunity to speak about the importance of the Royal Canadian Air Cadet program. For young people interested in aviation, it is indeed an opportunity to learn about navigation, meteorology, and even have the opportunity to fly. Young cadets start out in a classroom and end up leaders in the program, teaching fitness classes and survival skills to new recruits, and piloting gliders. Air cadets support the veterans’ community, selling poppies and accompanying veterans to Remembrance Day events and other occasions. It is stirring to see these young people supporting the men and women of an earlier generation who also served in uniform. Throughout it all these cadets learn teamwork, self-discipline, leadership, and citizenship, lessons they will carry their entire lives.

Chris Hadfield grew up on a farm in Milton, Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and remembers dreaming of space flight. He joined the air cadets in Milton in the early ’70s, and he says that he kind of grew up with the organization, first learning to fly with the cadets. Hadfield says that the lessons he learned about self-discipline, teamwork, and flying, among other things, inform his life to this day. Mr. Hadfield, as we all know, went on to command the International Space Station and was the first Canadian to walk in space. Who knows if these young cadets will fly that high, but I would not bet against them.

I recently had the opportunity to visit with the 287 Beaumont Spitfire Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron and help to present awards to some very talented cadets and got the chance to learn about the great programs that are offered and the excellent work that they do in the community. There are more than 3,100 air cadets in Alberta, and I know all members will join me in saluting these outstanding young people and their leadership during Air Cadet Week in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Budget 2019

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, now that the federal election is over, we finally got to see what this new government has in store for Alberta with their first budget, and, my goodness, it isn’t pretty. No wonder they hid their plans until after the federal ballots were cast, because the members opposite have taken many of the worst ideas that turned Ontario to quickly go against its Conservative government. These folks decided that rather than learn from Premier Ford’s mistakes, they’d double down on them.

Indexing of benefits for AISH recipients, something the UCP members spoke in favour of and voted for last term: gone now. What’s a little about-face and broken promises when you’ve got big

corporate friends in need of a \$4.7 billion handout? Indexing of benefits for low-income seniors, which ensures that those who worked their entire lives to help build Alberta don’t fall further behind: gone now. This Premier and the UCP felt it was more important to spend \$30 million on a secretive and unaccountable one-industry war room dedicated to chasing ghosts on the Internet. It is almost Halloween, after all. Tax incentives for petrochemical diversification, for Alberta’s burgeoning film industry, for the important high-tech industries, that so many future jobs will depend on: all gone. Proper funding for educational enrolment growth: gone. Proper funding for high-quality postsecondary education: gone. Proper funding for Edmonton’s first hospital in over 30 years: gone.

After all these sacrifices, what will Albertans have gained? Certainly nothing approximating a debt-free province. Just like the Harper government did in Ottawa, this failed Conservative agenda will rack up record amounts of new debt while destroying vital services, because despite what they say about concern for Alberta’s books, this government is really only about one thing, protecting and providing more for their wealthy friends. Shame on them, Mr. Speaker.

Gathering of the Clans Festival in Sedgewick

Ms Lovely: Mr. Speaker, it was my distinct honour to participate in the second Gathering of the Clans Highland Festival in Sedgewick this August. The event was organized by the Flagstaff Scottish society. The chieftain for the event was Rosemary Imlah. Kevin Sorenson, the former MP for Battle River-Crowfoot, and Perry Robinson, the mayor of Sedgewick, and I had the pleasure of marching behind the Battle River Pipes and Drums.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

There is something magical about the sound of the bagpipe, and one day it’s my dream to learn how to play this fascinating instrument. As expected, there was a talented musician; storytellers, who told tales of dragons; Scottish dancers; bagpipe and kilt demos; and, of course, the most marvellous music one could ever imagine. The skill of the dogs and masters was shown in sheepherding and the strength of the participants in tug-of-war. Among the vendors you could locate your clan as the Macphersons, Grahams, Wallaces, Hays, and MacNicolts had their family tartans and history available regarding many of their prominent family members. To determine if you have even a wee bit of Scottish ancestry, the Alberta Genealogical Society was present.

At the celebration I had my first opportunity to see Highland cows. These are lovely animals with long hair and horns, which they use to dig up plants as food during the winter months. Their stature ranges from about three to four feet, much shorter than cattle we normally see here in Alberta. The breed is known for being extremely hardy, and due to the decreased amount of cholesterol in their meat, the breed is becoming more popular and thriving in our climate.

A distinguishing portion of the event was the Scottish Highland games. There were many fascinating events such as putting the stone, heavy weight for height, hammer, sheaf toss, and caber toss. Watching the contestants participate in these events was fascinating. I was impressed by the number of people who attended the event. Although heritage ranged from all parts of the world, that day we were all a wee bit Scottish.

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

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. [interjections]

Hon. members, the statement was for Lethbridge-West, which I did call. However, seeing the Member for St. Albert rise, I will allow the member to make a statement.

Please proceed.

1:50 Personal Income Tax Indexation Cessation

Ms Renaud: Albertans are outraged that this Premier is jacking up their personal income taxes, and he's trying to do it on the sly. Now, I know we're going to hear the Premier and his minister say things like, "If your income stays the same, your taxes stay the same," "Our rates aren't going up," or some other smokescreen. So let's talk facts. If an Albertan income goes up with inflation and so does the tax bracket – that's the system we have now – they pay the same. But if the bottom of the bracket doesn't go up with inflation, a bigger share of their income is exposed to taxation. They pay more. That's the UCP plan. If another Albertan's income stays exactly the same, an indexed tax bracket, like the one we have now, will rise and protect more of their income from taxation, and they pay slightly less tax every year. The UCP is abolishing this so that Albertans will pay more tax than they would have if the Premier would have kept his hands off personal income taxes.

The proof, the bottom line, is right there in black and white, right in the middle of page 149 of this government's fiscal plan. This scheme will produce \$600 million in additional income tax revenue for the government. That money doesn't come out of thin air. That is \$600 million pulled out of the pockets of everyone who pays personal income tax. Let's be clear: every single Albertan taxpayer in every single riding represented in this House will pay more income tax under this UCP budget.

It's shameful that this Premier broke his campaign promise – again – to Albertans, and it's very arrogant that he thought he could do so without anyone noticing. Albertans noticed, Madam Speaker. Now every government member will have to go home and explain why every single person that voted for them got stuck with a tax hike to pay for this Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Government Motion 34

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stood in this House on the 17th of October and offered my support to Motion 34, which really resonated with Albertans. I discussed our provincial motto, Strong and Free, how leaders should be out front to lead, and made clear my allegiance to our province and our country. I'm deeply touched by the response from across Canada. I made a post entitled *Poke the Bear* with the video of that speech and received nonstop support for it. People from across Canada support our province, our country, and our government. I've been told that that video has been viewed almost 500,000 times.

I would like to read a few key parts of an e-mail received from a couple of my constituents, Marion and Chad, after seeing that post.

Last night we watched you in action on your video at the Alberta Legislature regarding motion 34. We are... impressed with your... passionate message fighting for your constituents and representing your views [that] align with ours. Both myself and my husband worked at Suncor Energy and the Imperial Oil Kearl project for over twenty-five years.

This amazing industry has been part of our lives as Albertans for many years. We understand the importance of our resources and how the oil and gas industry has benefited all of Canada.

This past election has caused a great deal of anger from all of us here in Alberta. We are strong supporters of [the current government's commitments] and want cooler heads to prevail.

... I felt compelled to reach out to you and state that I really feel optimistic for our future... We support your efforts one hundred per cent!

[The Speaker in the chair]

Another note I received was from a gentleman by the name of Glen Brooks, a former Australia airborne member. He and his wife recently became Canadian citizens, living on Vancouver Island.

I've watched that [video] twice, and it's not politics you are talking about. It's about the life blood of belief. Belief that we can do better, belief that we can struggle and succeed, belief that the very smallest part of our society no matter what your religious or political beliefs... We are all Albertan... Canadian.

I am like you, my brother, a believer. A believer in the fragile system we see every day in Canada. In saying that, we are also dreamers... We dream of a better Alberta, a better Canada, and by solid belief in our constitutional process... we shall have it.

These are the Canadians that are standing together, speaking up about the kind of Canada that they believe in, one that's strong and free.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

Personal Income Tax Indexation Cessation

Ms Notley: Vicious, pernicious, "an enormous, insidious tax grab": Mr. Speaker, that's this Premier describing bracket creep. Yes, his bad-news budget contains just that grab, picking \$600 million out of the pockets of hard-working Albertans, all so that he can pay for this \$4.7 billion giveaway to big corporations. To the Premier. He promised not to raise taxes, but he is. Why did folks over there lie to Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Oh, Mr. Speaker, it is getting pathetic over there in socialist land, I'll tell you. That's the party that imposed the largest tax hike in Alberta history, the carbon tax, that punished seniors for heating their homes. The largest tax hike in history was from the NDP; the largest tax cut was the UCP's elimination of the carbon tax. We are cleaning up the NDP's terrible fiscal mess while also bringing jobs back to this province. We're going to keep our word with Albertans.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is more than a backpedal; it's a total backflip. He called bracket creep a serious systemic flaw in our tax system, a heartless and insidious tax. When the Liberals refused to index tax brackets, he accused them of, quote: screwing the taxpayer. So I'll ask the same question this Premier asked when he was in Ottawa. From the MP for Calgary Southeast, the current Premier: "Why is this government telling Canadians they will get tax relief when in fact they will end up with less money in their wallets at the end of the day?"

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I know I lost a couple of pounds on the keto, but I couldn't do a backflip if my life depended on it.

Mr. Speaker, what this government can do, though, what this government will do is clean up the fiscal crisis left behind by the NDP. They promised a balanced budget. Instead, they quadrupled our debt: six credit downgrades, a track to \$100 billion in debt, billions in interest payments. Albertans could not afford an NDP

government mortgaging our future. That's why we're bringing our budget back under control.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is about taxes, but it's also about integrity. In 2015 we told Albertans that those who could afford to pay a little more would, because I believe that when times are tough, people who can afford to pay more should pay their fair share. But what this Premier said in the last election was: no new income tax changes. Six months later every taxpayer in Alberta is forking over a combined \$600 million in new income taxes. To the Premier: why did folks over there mislead Albertans in the last election?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, she just said that every taxpayer is going to pay \$600 million more and that there's a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. They're making it all up. There are zero increases to income taxes in this budget. There is a tax increase; it's \$5 on a carton of cigarettes, so we average the other western provinces. That's going to bring in \$50 million to help deal with health-related concerns that come from smoking. This is a tax-cutting government. We delivered the largest tax cut in our history, a \$1.4 billion tax reduction through the carbon tax. They voted against it.

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

Budget 2019

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I lost count, after about seven, of the number of misstatements of fact by the Premier just there.

In addition to income tax, Albertans will pay in a whole bunch of other ways as well. For example, the Premier's budget jacks up property taxes. Calgary's mayor says: Calgarians will end up paying more or face massive service cuts. Edmonton's mayor called an emergency meeting: the options are – wait for it – big tax increases or abandoning major infrastructure. That's because of this Premier. Why is this Premier making municipalities do his dirty work for him?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as the MacKinnon panel underscored, grants to municipalities in Alberta are significantly higher than in any other province. Under this budget we are going from having the largest infrastructure budget in Canada and the largest municipal capital grants prebudget to having the largest infrastructure spending and the largest municipal capital grants in Canada after the budget. It's a responsible 15 per cent reduction. The alternative is running up a hundred billion dollar debt, and we won't do that to Albertans.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, this budget also slashes programs that make life more affordable for those who need it the most: a cut in child and family benefits to 165,000 low- and middle-income families, including 55,000 who lose them entirely; 46,000 people getting kicked off our drug plan; \$44 million in rental assistance gone. Tell me: is this Premier so tone deaf that he believes out-of-province shareholders need help with affordability more than Alberta families who are struggling to pay their rent?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: I have to correct myself, Mr. Speaker. The reduction of municipal infrastructure grants is 9 per cent, not 15 per cent, and the overall reduction in operating spending in this budget is 2.8 per cent, three pennies on the dollar. What you hear with the NDP's fear and smear is the inability of a party to even identify three

pennies of savings on every dollar of the biggest spending government in Canada. Albertans know that they're wrong. That's why they hired this government, in part, to bring order back to our province's finances.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look at it the other way as this budget picks people's pockets. Take the family to the museum, five bucks more; register a vehicle, five bucks more; hauling a camper, 50 bucks more; need a benefits statement, 50 bucks more; land title fees, double them. And don't get me started on the bitter irony of a former immigration minister adding a brand new \$500 fee for citizenship applications. Premier, will Albertans ever stop paying for your great, big, fat, no-jobs \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

Mr. Kenney: There is no such thing, Mr. Speaker. As Professor Tombe said, "Why the 4.5 billion [dollar] claim continues is a real puzzle. It is demonstrably misleading . . . but, I guess, politically convenient." She just talked about citizenship fees. The government of Alberta does not process citizenship applications; the government of Canada does. Everything that she's saying, she's making up. But what's the alternative? A hundred billion dollars in debt that would jeopardize the future of public services. They want to send money to bondholders. We want to invest it in public services. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: I would certainly urge the Premier to maybe read his budget.

Education and Postsecondary Funding

Ms Notley: Anyway, in addition, it does hit kids, parents, and university students the absolute hardest. There are 15,000 more students coming into our schools this year alone, and this budget calls for larger classes, fewer supports, and cuts to programs. The Premier claims that he's funded enrolment, but school boards will get \$200 less per student, a 2 per cent cut. The ATA calls it a shell game, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why are kids in school getting less while big corporations get more, \$4.7 billion more to be exact? Look at his budget.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, you know, I've got about 25 years of parliamentary experience. I've never seen a parliamentarian with the tendency to make things up so blatantly as the failed leader of the NDP. In this year's budget the forgone revenue from the job-creation tax cut, she says it's \$4.7 billion. It's, in fact, \$100 million. She's off by over 98 per cent. Here's the reality. If we don't act now, according to former NDP Finance minister Dr. MacKinnon, then we actually would have to cut deeply in the future. We won't do that. We're being responsible.

Mr. Bilous: Raising taxes on . . .

The Speaker: Order. The Opposition House Leader will come to order.

Ms Notley: Well, for an education I would certainly urge the Premier to rewatch his own clips in question period.

Nonetheless, the folks over there also lied about funding enrolment growth. Over the next four years 60,000 new students will come into our schools, and this UCP government won't hire a single teacher to greet them at the door, but for roughly the same amount of money this Premier has chosen instead to subsidize Husky oil's investments in Newfoundland and the U.S. To the Premier: is he

really so tone deaf that he thinks that kind of choice is what Albertans voted for?

Mr. Kenney: No, Mr. Speaker. What is she talking about? You know, this is why. They live in this socialist fantasyland. It all kind of hangs together based on making stuff up. The leader of the NDP has never come to terms with the fact that all of this that she is claiming was rejected by Albertans just six months ago. They gave this government a mandate to bring order back to our finances, and that's exactly what we're doing: maintaining the highest level of education funding anywhere in Canada.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier's budget also slams college and university students. As one student put it on the radio this morning: they're shooting us in the knees but telling us to run faster. A 21 per cent hike to tuition, college and university funding slashed, cancelled tax credits, high interest on student loans, Premier, explain this to me: our province's economic future depends on these students getting a world-class education, so why are you making them subsidize Husky's investments south of the border?

Mr. Kenney: No such thing, Mr. Speaker. But as former NDP Finance minister Janice MacKinnon underscored in her expert report, Alberta has by far the least efficient universities in Canada. We spend about \$10,000 more per student than Ontario does, for example, although we get lower enrolment and lower completion rates than in the rest of the country. You see, this is the problem with the NDP. They thought it was a mark of success that we ran the most expensive and least efficient provincial government in Canada with substandard results. Albertans demand better, they expect better, and with this government they're going to get better.

AISH Indexation

Ms Notley: What Albertans have gotten, Mr. Speaker, is an unprecedented bait and switch. Unconscionable, mean-spirited: that's what Albertans are calling this Premier's decision to deindex support for disabled Albertans on AISH, and the Premier appears proud of it. He says: it isn't onerous. It's not onerous for disabled Albertans to get less so corporations can get more. Yet this spring his campaign clearly stated they would continue to index AISH. When did the Premier decide to break his promise to severely disabled Albertans, and also, where is your heart?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, even though the NDP left behind a fiscal crisis, this government worked very hard to ensure that we protect the vulnerable in this budget. The budgets for community, family, and child services are all going up in this budget. The budget for Health is going up: \$150 million in additional investments for persons with mental health challenges and addiction crises. We've accepted the significant increase in AISH into this budget, which is by far the highest level of income assistance for the severely disabled in Canada. [interjections] We're proud of that. We will maintain that generosity.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert will not make statements that say: why did you lie?

Ms Renaud: I'll try not to.

The Speaker: No. You won't try not to. You will not make statements that say . . .

Ms Renaud: I'll do my best.

The Speaker: No. You won't do your best. You will not make statements like: why did you lie? It's wildly unparliamentary and unacceptable.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, either they decided to break their promise very recently, or the CSS minister intentionally said things that were not true. Just last month on the issue of AISH indexing she told the media, quote: I think it's fair; it's compassionate. I think it's sensible. Inflation has made life much more expensive for all Albertans, all Canadians. I'm fully supportive. End quote. Yet today Albertans are seeing a government that's unfair, uncaring, and decidedly unsupportive. Why were folks over there so comfortable with lying to Albertans with disabilities?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the previous NDP government in 2015, 2016, 2017, and through the end of 2018 had no indexation for AISH benefits. The previous government did increase AISH benefits. Our party voted for that; our government is maintaining that. It is \$400 more generous than the next most generous province in Canada. We're proud, even while correcting the fiscal crisis of the NDP, to be supporting people who are most vulnerable in our society.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition, I have made many comments around people indicating that members on one side of the House or the other are misleading the House. I haven't yet provided comments on saying, "Folks over there are lying," but the leader might want to consider her words as we move forward.

AISH Indexation (continued)

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker. All of this is shameful. They voted in favour of AISH indexing. They spoke in support in this House. They promised to keep it during the election. They promised to keep it a month ago. This is more than a broken promise. This is despicable penny-pinching, and it's going to hurt the people who can afford it the very least. Every member over there should be ashamed. How does this Premier give corporations a \$4.7 billion handout and then look these Albertans in the eye? Who does that?

2:10

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a budget that finds 2.8 per cent savings in the most inefficient provincial government in Canada, which spends more on everything – 20 per cent more than our fellow provinces. What we're hearing from the NDP is that they are completely incapable of even contemplating us operating as efficiently as other provinces. What is the alternative? Over \$100 billion in debt and billions of dollars going to bankers and bondholders. We will not follow the fiscal disaster of the NDP. We will get our finances in order to protect our public services.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has the call.

Surgery Wait Times

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the former government our health care system here in Alberta delivered longer and longer wait-lists for surgeries to Albertans. A 2018 report by the Fraser Institute found that Albertans on average spend over 26 weeks waiting to go from a general practitioner to a specialist to

receiving treatment, compared to a national average of 19.8 weeks. To the Minister of Health: how will this government address surgical wait times and ensure that patients will have timely access to care and not just access to a wait-list?

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

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the previous government spent four years watching our wait times in Alberta get longer and doing nothing about it. It's something that's now left to us to try to fix. For example, the wait for a hip replacement rose from 29 weeks to 38 weeks under their watch. Our wait times went, from before that government, from being mostly shorter than the national average to being mostly longer, and for those four years doing nothing about it. It's being left to us to try and fix it. We campaigned on fixing it. I'm looking forward this fall to being able to announce what our surgical initiative is going to be.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that surgical wait times for medically necessary procedures continued to soar under the previous government despite their having spent an additional \$3 billion in health care and given that since elected I have heard from multiple constituents in Grande Prairie waiting in pain for their surgeries to be scheduled and given that a current review of Alberta Health Services is under way to pinpoint critical changes needed in our system, can the Minister of Health please explain how our government will ensure that Albertans are getting the care they're waiting for and specifically how this backlog will be cleared?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many aspects to it. First, we need to increase system capacity. We're going to do that by adding continuing care beds in Alberta and by bringing back the successful ASLI partnership. We also need to work with clinicians to make sure that the right patients get listed for surgery so that we have the best outcomes, and of course we need to do more surgeries. We have about 70,000 Albertans now waiting on the wait-list. It now falls to us to fix that wait-list by adding more surgeries that will be getting done in the next four years.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that other provinces like Saskatchewan and British Columbia have benefited from allowing specialized private day-surgical clinics to bid for contracts with their provincial governments and given that these benefits include reduced wait times and less strain on government resources and given that there are people currently working while injured in this province as their benefits run out long before their surgeries are scheduled, to the same minister: is this government considering expanding the number of contracts available to private surgical clinics to reduce the current wait times for Albertans? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Health has the call.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. But first I would just like to talk about these clinics and point out that here in Alberta we call them nonhospital surgical facilities, or NHSFs. It's a difficult, horrible phrase that we use for these things. They've been around for decades. There are 42 of them. The surgeries that they're providing, though, are 100 per cent publicly funded. But, yes, we will be working with those partners, these 42 clinics that now are

providing 15 per cent of those surgeries out of the 300,000 surgeries that we have done in Alberta in any given year. We will be working with them, yes.

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

Husky Energy Layoffs and Corporate Taxation

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Husky Energy stands to receive a nearly quarter-billion dollar gift from this Premier, yet they moved quickly last week to lay off dozens, potentially hundreds of workers from its headquarters in Calgary. To the minister of labour. Any termination of 50 employees or more requires you to be notified, by law. Will you finally tell this House how many people lost their jobs last week at Husky?

Mrs. Savage: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that the root cause for lower drilling, the decline in investments, and job losses is the lack of pipeline capacity. This has led to curtailment and loss of jobs. The NDP legacy on pipelines is abysmal. [interjections] The jeer and heckling on that side of the House will not solve the problems they created. If we had pipelines, we would not have had the job losses.

Mr. Sabir: Given that Husky's CEO told reporters last week that while layoffs are occurring in Calgary, the company is still making capital investments in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and the United States and given that this Premier's \$4.7 billion giveaway is creating no jobs here – in fact, we have lost 27,000 jobs – to the Premier: when you ran on your corporate giveaway and said that it would create jobs, did you mean jobs in other provinces? It's certainly not creating any here.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we're confident that our policies will attract investment, create job opportunities, and additional government revenues in the long term. Job growth in this province has been flat since May. We acknowledge that. It will do better in the future. We're confident, again, that as we implement these policies that create a very competitive business environment, we will attract the investment flows that the policies of the previous government sent south of the border. We will reverse that trend.

Mr. Sabir: Given that Albertans didn't vote for job creation in Newfoundland or the U.S. and given that this Premier's corporate handout is an epic failure and given that that \$4.7 billion could be used to keep the Calgary cancer centre and Calgary green line and keep Calgary nurses and teachers in their jobs rather than cutting them all, like this Premier is proposing, to the Premier. My question is simple. If you're not creating jobs, can Albertans at least have their money back so that we can spend it on something useful?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, the opposition continues to play fast and loose with the facts. The reality is that in this current year our job-creation tax cut will only reduce government revenues by \$100 million. The numbers the opposition is using are completely fictitious. Moreover, this budget is a budget of responsibility, a budget that Albertans elected this government to deliver to bring this province back to balance. We have accomplished our mission with budget number 1. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. members of the Official Opposition will come to order.

Tax Credit Program Cancellation

Mr. Bilous: I feel betrayed: that, Mr. Speaker, is how the CEO of Beamdog described the UCP's decision to eliminate the digital

media tax credit. Beamdog employs 50 Albertans and had plans to double its operations before this government took office. Other companies are threatening to leave the province outright. Does the minister of economic development and trade think that it's a fair trade-off to see job creators leaving Alberta just to pay for her Premier's jobless \$4.7 billion handout?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, this government is taking the approach to broadly improve the competitiveness of our business environment. We're confident that the private sector can make the best decisions in terms of allocating capital to businesses and sectors that in the long term will be sustainable. We are also incredibly supportive of our tech industry. [interjections] We recognize that innovation and commercialization of leading research will be critical to improving the competitiveness of the economy broadly. We're working with that sector to ensure that they're sustainable in the future.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it is useful for the Speaker to be able to hear the answer. I appreciate a good heckle from time to time, but if I could hear the answer, that would also be appreciated.

2:20

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, I think that the government's nose is growing. Given that the general manager of Improbable stated that the tax credit program contributed directly to their expansion from four to 70 employees in Alberta and given that the same company stated that this government's actions are causing them to look elsewhere to spend their money to grow – sound familiar? – is the minister of economic development and trade concerned about the harm she's inflicting on the Alberta tech sector, or is it only companies that profit from the zero-jobs corporate giveaway that get her attention?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of the tech sector in this province. We also recognize that we're a world leader in AI and machine learning. We're working with participants in that sector to determine how we can assist them to ensure that we continue to grow and, more importantly, so that we can assist that sector in commercializing their technology into the broader economy to improve the competitiveness of every aspect of our economy.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's abundantly clear that the Finance minister and the other ministers need to meet with these companies. Given that this minister has only produced spin and talking points for legitimate private-sector questions and given that this minister's choices are causing real harm, job losses, and companies moving investments out of Alberta, will the minister listen to these companies and reinstate these crucial tax credit programs, and if not, why not?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to invest in artificial intelligence and machine-learning technology. We are investing \$40 million in AI and machine learning. We are investing \$200 million through Alberta Innovates to encourage and enhance that sector to ensure that we continue to be world leaders. More importantly, we are going to work with the industry to commercialize those innovative concepts to ensure that, broadly speaking, Alberta has a more competitive economy on the global stage.

Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

Mr. Neudorf: Mr. Speaker, supervised consumption sites are a critical issue to many people who make Lethbridge their home. My

constituents need to receive clear direction from this government regarding the continued utilization of Lethbridge's supervised consumption site and how this site is tackling the issue of addictions management in Lethbridge. To the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: can you clarify what this government's direction on the usage of supervised consumption sites will be?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for pointing out a very important question. Yes, he is correct. We heard it loud and clear at the doorsteps of Albertans that community and business have been impacted by these services. This is why we appointed a panel to conduct a robust socioeconomic review of the supervised consumption sites.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Minister.

Given that we need to invest in programs and services that will help lift individuals out of addiction and into positions of self-empowerment and economic betterment, to the same minister: how is this government ensuring that the dollars invested in supervised consumption programs in Lethbridge and across this province are making a real and measurable impact on those struggling with addictions?

The Speaker: The associate minister.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the previous government, who seemed to be focused entirely on the one-pillar approach and failed to consult business, we're going to do it differently. Our approach is going to be focused on a fair, firm, and compassionate approach. We're committed to getting Albertans into recovery, but we will not sacrifice the rest of the community while we're doing this to help others.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Knowing that overcoming an addiction is a lifelong journey for those who have faced it and given that we must consider a holistic approach to assisting those who struggle with addictions in order to truly provide the help that they deserve, to the same minister: what specific supports and programs is this government investing in that will bridge the gap between supervised consumption and recovery from addictions?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is time for Alberta to move from managing the crisis to helping Albertans, pointing a way to recovery. Our government in the next four years is going to work very hard at making life better for Albertans by increasing access to treatment and recovery spaces by 4,000 spaces. This means access to treatment beds, detox beds, outpatient spaces, opioid dependency programs, and long-term recovery support. We are focused on getting Alberta well.

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

Seniors' Drug Coverage

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Alberta seniors have dependent spouses who haven't reached their 65th birthday yet. These older Albertans were able to access the seniors' drug

benefit program, but now the UCP government is throwing these older Albertans off the drug plan. This means these households, often on fixed incomes, will have to pay to manage chronic conditions and serious disease. To the minister of seniors: how many households are you pushing into poverty to pay for your \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

The Speaker: I see the Minister of Health is rising.

Mr. Shandro: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to speak about the seniors' drug plan. The seniors' drug plan is, in its name, meant for seniors. We are going to make sure that it is going to be available, the \$600 million that we spend on the seniors' drug plan, for seniors who are over the age of 65 to make sure it's sustainable and always available for our seniors. We're going to make sure it's sustainable by making sure that it is seniors who are on the seniors' drug plan.

Ms Sigurdson: Also, Mr. Speaker, given that children born into struggling families are frequently raised by their grandparents and given that these dependent children used to be able to access their grandparents' drug coverage until the UCP kicked them off the plan in this budget, again to the minister: how many children are you pushing into poverty to pay for your \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, as we know and we've seen today, we live in a postfact world with the NDP. They keep on throwing imaginary numbers at us. We are making sure that our seniors' drug plan is going to be available for our seniors for years to come by being responsible and by making sure that it's sustainable, making sure that the \$600 million that we continue to spend for our seniors is always going to be there for their seniors' drug plan.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that government officials estimated on budget day that 46,000 Albertans will lose their drug coverage as a result of this budget and given that Budget 2019 warns that income testing will be imposed on the seniors' drug benefit program soon, to the minister: how many seniors have told you they wanted to lose their life-saving drug coverage to pay for your \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, this is a \$600 million drug plan that we provide to our seniors who are over the age of 65. We're going to make sure that this is always going to be there for generations to come and that this drug plan is sustainable by being responsible, unlike the previous government. We are going to make sure that it's going to be available for our most vulnerable seniors in this province.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-City Centre would like to ask a question.

Registered and Licensed Practical Nurses

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've known for a while now that the UCP government had every intention to endanger the jobs of thousands of nurses to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout, and for months this Minister of Health has scoffed and dismissed that this was fearmongering. Well, now their plan to attack registered nurses is available for all to see on page 84 of their fiscal plan, "lower the number of . . . (RN) funded hours" being the euphemism. Why is the Minister of Health so eager to strip our health care system of hard-working, highly trained professionals?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I think what the question was was one gigantic euphemism for pitting one health profession against

another, pitting our licensed practical nurses against our registered nurses. It's quite shameful. We are quite happy to see the expansion of the scope of practice for our LPNs in this province. The fact that the NPD want to continue to attack the expansion of that scope and want to actually see more transitions in care throughout this province, which, quite frankly, is against the best interests of patient safety, is reprehensible and shameful.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the only person that has attacked LPNs is this minister and his government as he illegally tore up their contracts with AHS through legislation and given that he and his big-money UCP donors are fighting those same LPNs which he claims to respect in court and at the labour board as we speak, to this minister: are you asking LPNs, because you respect them so much, to do more? If you're going to do that, will you commit that you will not then try to pay them less as long as you remain the Minister of Health?

2:30

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, we have 16,000 LPNs in this province. I'm very happy to have worked with the college. Their regulation had not been touched since it first passed in 2003. They have been asking, this college has been asking for this expansion of scope probably since 2003. It was something that should have happened under the previous government. They ignored it for whatever reason, probably because, as we see today and as we've seen over the weekend, they're trying to pit one health profession against the other. It's shameful. I'm very happy to work with the LPNs to make sure that they are working to the full capacity of their scope of practice.

Mr. Shepherd: I'll take it, then, Mr. Speaker, that the minister intends to cut all of their wages equally.

Given that this minister is raising their taxes while cutting the wages of nurses of all designations and given that more than 56,000 Alberta households are supported by the hard-earned income of an RN or an LPN and noting that these nurses are overwhelmingly women, to the minister: why are you targeting female wage earners to pay for your government's failed \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that is responsible and balanced and supporting our front-line workers. I'll pick out a number from our budget. We were able to spend less on the amount of fuel that we spend on our ambulances because we killed the job-killing carbon tax so we could have that money going to our front-line workers rather than the NDP's carbon tax. That's the kind of balance and thoughtfulness that we were voted in to be able to bring to Alberta.

Animal Rights Activist Farm and Ranch Protests Automobile Insurance

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year one of my friends, his family, and their livestock were threatened. Criminals wearing ski masks trespassed on to their private property and feedlot with the intention of opening the gates and letting the livestock run free. With the help of neighbours the criminals were detained. The RCMP were called, arrived, but no charges were laid. To the Minister of Justice: will the government commit to ensuring that these eco radicals face justice in order to restore some sense of order in rural Alberta?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, this exact situation came up in town hall after town hall after town hall across rural Alberta. That's why

we announced clear measures to send a signal to these folks that are illegal trespassers on our farmers' properties that no longer in Alberta will that be tolerated. We're going to be making sure that for first offences they could face a fine of \$10,000 and subsequent offences \$25,000. If you're involved in an organization that's organizing this, you could face a fine of up to \$200,000. We stand with our farmers. They're the best in the world. We're proud of them, and we've got their back.

Mr. van Dijken: Given that the victims of the aforementioned crime did not need any more difficulties in their lives and given that my friend had his farm insurance dropped by his insurance company because he was, quote, too great a risk for ecoterrorism, to the Minister of Finance. My friend feels stuck. Criminals walk away without facing consequences, and insurance companies will not support him. Insurance companies need to know that we are taking rural crime seriously to prevent losses. Can the government commit to working with insurance companies to ensure that farms will be protected?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. As a rancher myself this kind of activity is completely unacceptable, unacceptable to agriculture in this province. These perpetrators need to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and while insurance is delivered privately in this province, I'd offer to the member that he can deliver the details of this case, and we can certainly follow up.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the auto insurance industry is also dropping clients because auto insurance is no longer profitable and given that this is largely due to the previous NDP government's 5 per cent cap on insurance companies, to the Minister of Finance. This government recognizes that the 5 per cent cap is harmful and will not be renewing it. Does the government anticipate this will be enough to ensure that people will have access to auto insurance, and will the government provide any other support for these companies and consumers? [interjections]

The Speaker: I hear members of the Official Opposition interjecting, asking how this might be a supplemental. Very clearly, the question is about insurance and its availability to Albertans, so the hon. Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board can answer the question.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, there are challenges in the automobile insurance industry, and they're challenges that were greatly increased because of the failed policies of the previous government. The previous government put a Band-Aid fix on a problem that needed much more substance than that. This government is doing a review of automobile insurance. We will have the courage to take this problem head-on and ensure that Albertans have access to competitively priced automobile insurance. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Hon members of the Official Opposition, you will know that when the Speaker is on his feet, you will come to order. You're a very excitable bunch today.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a question.

Support for Postsecondary Students

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The UCP's first budget has bad news for almost every Albertan, but one group that has been particularly picked on is Alberta's young adults. With

Budget 2019 allowing massive hikes to postsecondary tuition and even an increase to the interest rate charged on student loans, my question is for the minister of labour. Now that your government has chosen to make it so expensive to pursue higher education, will you commit to reversing your needless and unhelpful cut to the minimum wage for working students? Clearly, they're going to need that money to survive in your Alberta.

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

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education is who I will recognize.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to hear some of the comments from the members opposite. You know, obviously, in my role I spend a lot of my time having very in-depth conversations with students and with young Albertans, and the single biggest concern is jobs and careers at the end of their program. They want to know that their program is going to connect them into the labour market and give them adequate jobs. It's clear. We know that with the NDP we've seen the highest youth unemployment in decades, and we're working to correct it.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, given that Budget 2019 eliminates the summer temporary employment program, or STEP, as it was known, an excellent government wage subsidy program that helped match youth with high-quality employment opportunities, and given that this minister professes to care so deeply about youth employment, although he did cut the wages for all working students, will this minister commit to immediately reversing the cancellation of the STEP program, and if not, why not?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We sympathize with employers and students who were hoping to receive funding from the STEP program next summer. That said, Albertans elected us overwhelmingly to get the province's financial house in order. Difficult decisions are required when you are the recipient of a \$60 billion debt. In this case other resources are available to support employers and youth. STEP was an inefficient use of government funds. It did not target those who actually needed the funds, and it didn't create long-term employment.

Ms Gray: Given that this minister's staff referred to it as free money for companies, I suspect his respect is not actually earned.

Given that on CBC Radio at lunchtime the Minister of Finance laughably said that the STEP program wasn't fully subscribed and given that every single year more municipalities, public libraries, nonprofits, and particularly small businesses applied for funding, way more than could be approved for \$10 million, will the labour minister please correct the record, confirm that this was an incredibly popular and beneficial program, or is misleading Albertans the only way the UCP moves their agenda forward?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, this program was an inefficient use of government funds. We're committed to students, and we've taken action to make hiring students easier for job creators. We put policies in place, which include the job-creation student wage, and we also reduced unnecessary red tape for employers. In addition, the Minister of Advanced Education made an announcement just this morning that we will quadruple the number of students who can participate in programming through Careers: the Next Generation. We have a limited amount of funds. We need to put those funds to

work in an efficient manner, and we're doing this through our programs.

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

2:40 **Municipal Infrastructure Funding**

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Friday I attended the emergency meeting for the Edmonton city council held here in response to the UCP government's massive cuts to municipalities; for example, the \$150 million stolen from Edmonton infrastructure projects that had already been approved. Councillors and the chief economist for the city said that the cuts could push Edmonton into a recession like we saw in the 1990s. Why is the Minister of Municipal Affairs willing to risk a recession in his own city, our own city, to pay for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway?

The Speaker: I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is rising.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we took office, we learned that the NDP had miscalculated Alberta's finances by more than \$7 billion. Despite this, we are giving municipalities of all sizes the predictable funding they need to meet their long-time capital grant. This plan lies in accordance with the recommendations of the MacKinnon report. It will help to get municipal funding closer to the national average. We've received many endorsements for our plan, including from members of Edmonton and Calgary city councils.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the city charter agreement we landed with the big cities would have given revenue certainty to Edmonton and Calgary and given that the minister has now ripped this agreement up, cut the base funding by at least \$45 million, and taken to openly chastising city councillors for wasting money, Mr. Speaker, we've asked several times – and I know the minister has had some time to consider it – can the minister rise in this House and name one project that he believes was a waste of money in Edmonton or Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have explained how our funding plan will meet the needs of our municipalities while getting municipal funding closer to the national average. But I won't be lectured by that member, whose government imposed the largest tax increase in Alberta's history in the middle of a recession, a government who gutted one-third of downtown Calgary and oversaw six credit downgrades in Alberta's history with the highest unemployment rate in the country. We are working to clean up their mess, the mess that that incompetent member and her friends created.

Ms Hoffman: Given that Mayor Iveson said at the city council meeting and afterwards in interviews that what was most frustrating was that it was in the UCP platform to respect the big-city charter, the legal agreement that was struck with Edmonton and Calgary, and given that the mayor feels that he's been lied to by this government, how can the minister stand in this House and continue to make excuses for a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway? What did he say to the mayor in their meeting on Friday? How did he explain how the government lied about their campaign promise?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP should be asking themselves all of these questions. The NDP presented the most ridiculous fiscal projections to Albertans before and during the last election. They overprojected revenues by more than \$6 billion. That's the fiscal surprise they inflicted on this government and on taxpayers. Every

single challenging decision in this budget is a response to and is a result of the catastrophic fiscal irresponsibility of the NDP.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for [interjections] – order – Calgary-West.

Education Policies

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Parents, rightfully so, are very concerned about the education that their children receive each and every day when they send their children off to school. Alberta was formerly one of the highest performing regions in terms of student performance in North America; however, recent years have shown a declining trend in test scores for Alberta students between the ages of five and 18. Can the Minister of Education please elaborate on what steps our government is taking to reverse this trend?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. member for the question. Yes, we were elected with a clear mandate to reform student assessment and improve outcomes for our students. New grade reassessments will be developed in conjunction with the new curriculum. In the meantime school authorities are expected to share student learning assessment results with parents to ensure that parents understand how their child is progressing. We owe it to our students and their parents to get education right.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government recently passed the Education Act and given that the act ensures that school-aged children in grades K to 12 will be able to access education, can the minister please explain to this House how the government values the educational opportunities of all children?

Member LaGrange: Thank you again for the question. Alberta has a long and successful tradition of supporting choice in education opportunities for children, and our government is committed to preserving and protecting educational choice. In the future we will introduce the choice in education act, which will affirm that parents have primary responsibility for the education of their children. We value all the strong educational opportunities our system provides to students and their parents, and we'll continue to protect our strong and diverse education system.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government spent several years on a curriculum review and given that our government has created a panel to review the proposed changes of the former government, with the plans to finish the review in December, can the minister please elaborate on a timeline for these changes to be implemented?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and hon. member. Yes, my Curriculum Advisory Panel consists of individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences that will enhance the vision and direction for student learning in Alberta. The panel members will draft an updated ministerial order on student learning, which will modernize and strengthen how students are taught in the

classroom. The panel's work will be serving as a starting point for public engagement in the new year. I look forward to it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Educational Curriculum

Member Irwin: The year was 1984. Stevie Wonder, Prince, and Tina Turner topped the charts, the original Apple Macintosh computer hit the markets, and Alberta introduced its new junior high art curriculum.

Now fast-forward 35 years, and while music trends have changed and technology has shifted dramatically, that new curriculum is – wait for it – still in place. I'm not ageist. In fact, I too was introduced in 1984, but it's shameful that we've still got curriculum documents as old as I am. It's just that our kids deserve a modern curriculum, one that acknowledges the realities of our time and equips our students to take on issues like climate change, reconciliation, comprehensive sexual health, consent education, and more.

We've heard from countless folks – long-time educators, brand new teachers – who were so excited about the work our NDP government embarked on to move curriculum forward across six subject areas. What a significant undertaking, not just because of the age of the curriculum but for moving towards a more interdisciplinary approach, a concept-based curriculum that encourages students to engage in deep analysis of big issues.

But what will become of this work, of the thousands of hours of teachers, students, parents, and other experts, of the millions of dollars spent? This government speaks a big game about fiscal responsibility and government waste, but when it comes to curriculum, they're certainly not playing by their own rules. This Education minister claims that the work isn't being scrapped, but there's very little indication that it's truly moving forward.

I was there this summer when she announced her Curriculum Advisory Panel, a hodgepodge group missing a key factor: currently practising teachers. This panel adds unnecessary layers. This government is literally asking students and their teachers to pay to delay moving the curriculum into this century. Students don't need more panels. Students don't need more consultation. Students need a modern, relevant, evidence-based curriculum.

While 1984 was a great year – and this government seems to love living in the past – it's high time that we acknowledge that our kids and even our grandkids shouldn't be learning from the same curriculum that we did.

2:50

Ochi Day

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate October 28 as Ochi Day, which is commonly known as the anniversary of the no. This holiday celebrates the resilience, pride, and bravery of the Greek people in the face of imminent Fascist danger. This is a special day celebrated throughout Greece, Cyprus, and in Greek communities globally. It celebrates the complete rejection of Mussolini's ultimatum to the Greek people.

That ultimatum, Mr. Speaker, demanded that Greece allow Axis forces into Greek territory and occupy certain strategic locations or face imminent war. The Greek Prime Minister was rumoured to have pondered the statement briefly and then replied with a single word, "ochi": no. In response to that refusal, Mussolini's soldiers poured

across the Greek border on October 28, 1940. This attack marked the beginning of Greece's participation in the Second World War. That morning members of the Greek resistance took to the streets shouting: ochi, ochi. In less than a year Greek and Allied forces drove their Fascist invaders out of Greece forever. From 1942 onwards, October 28 has been celebrated as Ochi Day and has become a public holiday in Greece, Cyprus, and in communities all across the world.

Mr. Speaker, Greek immigrants have been moving to our great province since at least 1903. Within 10 years of their arrival they had formed tightly knit communities in Calgary and Edmonton, and by the late 1950s and '60s Greek immigration to Alberta increased significantly due to our province's booming economy and job prospects. Greek immigrants have played a major role in their contributions to Alberta's culture, heritage, and economic growth through their hard work and dedication.

I rise on behalf of my colleagues to wish all Greek Albertans a joyous Ochi Day.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a statement to make.

Personal Income Tax Indexation Cessation

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Deindexing of tax brackets, or bracket creep, is the Premier's scheme to break his central campaign promise and raise personal income taxes on every single Albertan.

Here are some thoughts on bracket creep from some prominent Albertans.

Bracket creep ... results in higher income-tax payments as inflation erodes the real value of personal exemptions and forces the payment of higher marginal income-tax rates ... Personal exemptions and brackets in the personal income tax should be fully [indexed].

That was Preston Manning writing in 1998.

Writing over the weekend, Professor Trevor Tombe of the University of Calgary, who the Premier often quotes, says:

Some are claiming that there are no tax increases. That is incorrect. De-indexing and removing some credits will increase income tax payments: roughly ~ \$330m in additional revenue ... per year. That comes from taxpayers. What else shall we call it?

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Premier himself has had a lot to say about tax policy. What has he said about the bracket-creep scheme contained in his own budget? He has called it: a hidden tax grab, an enormous, insidious tax grab, a tax grab, a backdoor tax grab, and the list goes on. So when the Premier presented this budget, he knew he was doing something hidden and insidious and backdoor to Albertans. Trying to jack up everyone's taxes and hoping they won't notice is not conservatism; it's hypocrisy of the highest order.

Thank you.

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

Skilled Trades Training

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is facing the challenge of retirement among skilled workers with not enough new workers to replace them. Our government is committed to finding a solution to that problem. As the chair of the Skilled Trades Caucus I am pleased to see that Budget 2019 invests in attracting the workers we need and developing the work skills necessary to move our province forward.

Budget 2019 expands the apprenticeship model with investment in Careers: the Next Generation, an organization connecting students

with apprenticeships and skills that will lead to high-paying jobs and rewarding careers. The over \$11 million in funding will double the number of schools that work with Careers: the Next Generation, from 500 to 1,000. It will quadruple the number of students and full-time apprentices, from 1,500 to 6,000, by 2023.

The budget also expands the apprenticeship model in its \$10 million investment in Women Building Futures, an organization that prepares women for careers, leading to economic prosperity through awareness, training, and opportunity.

Budget 2019 expands the apprenticeship model by investment in Skills Canada Alberta, a provincial nonprofit organization that actively promotes careers in skilled trades and technologies to Alberta youth. By allocating \$2 million over four years, we will help young Albertans build their technology skills and make connections on the national and world stages.

In an uncertain world where we can't count on the federal government, Alberta needs to be self-reliant so we're prepared for whatever the future might bring. Budget 2019 implements 24 of our platform commitments and was developed after extensive consultations with Albertans and with expert advice from the MacKinnon panel. Our government will live up to its promises, that we were elected on, to get Alberta back to work, to make life better for Albertans, and to stand up for Alberta. With Budget 2019 we are making life better for Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) the daily Routine shall continue past 3 p.m.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 20

Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce first reading of Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

Our government campaigned on a promise to address Alberta's crumbling financial situation and to achieve real savings for Albertans. That's why I'm so pleased to introduce this legislation, that will help get Alberta's finances back on track. This bill makes changes to a number of dedicated funds and tax credits to better focus resources. It includes pausing indexation of the personal income tax system so that we can be responsive to changing economic and fiscal conditions. I will be clear. This does not increase personal taxes; it maintains the current rate and current exemptions.

We're proposing to merge the Alberta family employment tax credit and the Alberta child tax benefit into one tax credit, which will save on administration and increase benefits to support those who need them most. I will be happy to go into further detail on this legislation when I rise here in the House to speak to the act at a later date.

This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a first time]

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

Bill 21

Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 21, the Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019.

Last spring we promised Albertans that we would balance the budget within our current mandate, and that is a promise that we intend to keep. The proposed bill will help us keep that promise by making important changes to several pieces of existing legislation and create new legislation where appropriate. These changes will help government control growth and program spending, eliminate duplication and make government more efficient, effectively oversee and co-ordinate all public-sector collective bargaining, and update current fiscal rules and reporting. Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to future generations to restore Alberta's fiscal health, and the proposed legislation is an important step we must take.

This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly. It is with a great sense of pride and purpose that I move first reading of Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two submissions today. One is a letter from a constituent, subject line "Afraid in Lethbridge," referring to the SCS. I have the requisite number of copies.

The second is a newspaper article from the *Lethbridge Herald*, Police Chief, Mayor Allay Fears to Recent Uptick of Crime in City, again addressing these issues.

Thank you.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert has a tabling.

Ms Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have an article entitled If Alberta Is the Front Line of Climate Change, Young People Are in the Trenches, and this is dated the 24th of this month from the *Huffington Post*.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. Yes. I'd like to table an article that's titled Kenney Budget Not Perfect, But at Least It's a Plan. It quotes:

Bravo! Coming after four years in which the NDP ramped up spending, hiring and borrowing in the public sector while the private sector languished in recession, Finance Minister Travis Toews blueprint is a very welcome change.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings?

Seeing none, I do have two tablings today. The first tabling is in accordance with section 28(1) of the Ombudsman Act. I have six of the requisite copies of the Alberta Ombudsman 52nd annual report.

Also, in accordance with section 33(1) of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act I am tabling the requisite six copies of the Public Interest Commissioner's sixth annual report.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 202

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019

[Debate adjourned October 21: Mrs. Aheer speaking]

The Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join the debate on Bill 202? I see the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Reid: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in this House today in support of Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It is a measure of how busy the past session was in this piece of legislation, formerly known as Bill 216, because it was not passed by session's end. But I am confident that with the full support of this entire House we can make Bill 202 law as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, all of us are here to serve our constituents, a responsibility to all Albertans, young and old. As legislators we develop the laws that serve and protect the families of all Albertans to provide a safe, secure present and a safe, secure future. This is why my colleague the Member for Calgary-West has worked so diligently in preparing this bill. I invite my colleagues from all parties to join me in support of these efforts.

What we seek to do through this bill is to aid the protection and rescue of Alberta's children, its very future. This bill works upon the foundation set by the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act by clarifying and enhancing the protections currently enshrined in that law. Currently the law requires adults to contact a director, as defined by section 122(2) of the act, if they are aware of a child that is in need of intervention. Bill 202 would instead direct Albertans to contact a police officer, as not only was the method of contacting a director left vague, but the very definition of a director was ambiguous. This government was elected on a promise to make common-sense decisions, and what makes more sense than to report a suspected crime to a police officer? Just this simple clarification has the potential to save children's lives and to avoid preventable deaths from abuse while a blind eye is turned. Let us all open those eyes.

Sadly, child abuse takes many forms. It can be neglect. It can be emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. It can happen to a child from any background. There are many reasons that abuse can happen in a home, but there are signs that anyone can see. Neglect of a child can be seen. Neglected children often have poor hygiene; their clothes are ripped or torn and look dirty. Neglected children are hungry. They are often underweight and dehydrated because of poor nutrition. The tragedy in this is how strong these kids are because they must struggle. Neglected children often step up around the home, trying to take on the responsibilities of the adults.

Emotional abuse is another common form of child abuse. Children's personalities are deeply impacted by this emotional abuse and the legacy that can carry on through their entire lives. They can develop anxiety and depression. They can be too eager to

please, constantly apologizing without reason. They are scared, and they are fearful. They certainly deserve better. Emotionally abusive parents are cruel. They humiliate their children and expose them to behaviour that no one should have to experience.

I've mentioned emotional abuse and neglect. There are signs and behaviours that the children exhibit that we can all see. They can be less obvious for other forms of abuse, like physical and sexual abuse, but we don't need to dwell on them. We all know the difference between a child that scrapes their knee on the playground versus something much more sinister.

Bill 202 is intended to send a clear, unequivocal sign to everyone that there is no place for indifference when children are in danger and that there are consequences that will be enforced on those who stand aside as children suffer. This bill increases the maximum penalty for failing to report an instance of abuse from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and up to six months in prison. To allow abuse to go unreported is to be complicit in the abuse in and of itself, and we cannot let this occur. Some have wondered if perhaps this goes too far, that a false report does as much damage as an unreported case, but I urge the members to err on the side of responding to every call rather than self-censoring and missing those we need to help.

Let us not think that the provisions of Bill 202 are happening in a vacuum. Day and night there are countless nonprofits and other organizations that work tirelessly to support our children. This government will work just as tirelessly in co-operation with these organizations to ensure that the most vulnerable among us, especially those who form our future, are given the protection and tools they need to succeed.

I urge all of my colleagues in this House, on either side of the aisle, to come together and make this bill law. Do what is right for our province's youth. I thank the member for his tireless work in returning this bill to the Order Paper. I hope that everyone will join me in standing with him and this bill, that adds teeth to our existing legislation.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 202? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising in this House today to speak in support of Bill 202, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019. I wish I could also rise in this House to share with you that we do not need legislation like this bill. I hope for a world where the incidents that this bill aims to protect children from are few and far between, but for the children affected by all forms of violence and abuse, this is not the reality.

The difficult truth we must face is that while these crimes against the most vulnerable members of our society are absolutely abhorrent, they are also some of the most undetectable. These crimes are against those that may not have a voice to advocate for themselves. Often the victims of these crimes are not able to put into words what is happening to them. In the cruelest way they are frequently unable to recognize and alert responsible parties to what is happening to them. In this way, justice for these survivors and their situations may never be seen.

Here is where we must step in as a voice for those affected by violence and abuse. As legislators, parents, and mentors to the valued youth and families we interact with across the province, we must do our part in standing up against child abuse, child exploitation, and violence within our families. We must all bear the responsibility of stewarding and protecting the next generation of Albertans, who will fill these halls, walk our streets, raise their own families, and live in our wonderful province. Beyond these obligations, we have the simple human ask of taking care of one another and looking out for one another.

This bill will bolster the importance of our duty to ensuring that children in our province remain safe and cared for. In situations where children are being abused or taken advantage of, a caring and informed adult may be the difference between safety and immediate danger for the child in question. We are all responsible for acting as the eyes and ears and voices for those who cannot advocate for themselves.

Bill 202 makes significant adjustments to standing legislation which will allow us to protect the vulnerable in a more tangible and effective way; namely, through reprimanding bystanders who witness these signs and atrocities. The addition of the requirements for adults to contact police officers and the increased penalties for failing to do so will save lives. We must be driven and determined in our commitment to inspiring actions where we witness signs and symptoms of abuse in the youth and families we interact with on a daily basis. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to children at risk of abuse.

In recent years there have been repeated instances of children suffering preventable deaths despite warning signs that should have been accounted for by responsible adults. Beyond what is reported by the news media and the horrible stories we hear year after year after year, we have to pay attention to the children that so frequently go under the radar. We have to be here and be aware of their stories and circumstances. Bill 202 will drive adults who witness these warning signs to action and place the importance of reporting and addressing these issues at the forefront of our collective responsibilities.

3:10

Some worry about the validity of going to authorities with what they have witnessed. Others have concern about overthinking what they have observed or are hesitant at reporting less than a full picture to police or child welfare agents. I urge members in the House to report what they see and what they bear witness to. In cases of harm against children one act is too many, and it's better to err on the side of overreaction than fail to react at all.

Bill 202 addresses the needs and concerns that many nonprofits and advocacy organizations that work with vulnerable youth have identified to our government. Further to this, Bill 202 will aid in the prosecution and resolution of those who commit these heinous crimes against our youth, better ensuring action for youth who have been impacted by these crimes. There is no question that stands as to the importance of this legislation.

According to the Zebra Child Protection Centre approximately 36 per cent of adults have experienced some form of abuse in their life. Of those supported by the Zebra centre, 90 per cent of children and youth under their care know their offenders. If Bill 202 is effective in saving even one life or makes a difference in permanently changing the course of an at-risk youth's life, then it has fulfilled its mission and purpose. We need to be stepping in and stepping up for one another as being the one adult who cares enough to notice when something is amiss in the life of a child.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the tireless work of nonprofits and other organizations across every corner of our province that support our children on their darkest days. The work of supporting and advocating for our youth is undoubtedly exhausting but wholly noble and important. Moving forward, Bill 202 will ensure that this work is not completed in vain and that both action and inaction have meaningful consequences.

You know, I urge everyone in this House to set differences of opinion and difference of perspective aside to do what is right for our youth. The future of these vulnerable young people rests in our hands today. I invite you to take a moment to recognize the weight and importance of the decision we have in front of us, but beyond

that, I encourage you to consider the responsibilities we have identified and discussed throughout the presentation of this bill. While I hope for a world where there is no need for a bill of this nature, I fully recognize its necessity and encourage that we stand in this House . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(iii), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's bill to close debate, I would like to invite the hon. Member for Calgary-West to close debate on Bill 202.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's humbling. It's been a journey. It's been a several-year journey, you know, to a bill that I believed to be common sense.

You know, I just want to take a moment and thank the young girl who this bill is named for, who was, sadly, murdered. I want to thank her family and the opportunity to get to know her family. I made a promise to Serenity's mom, especially when we were faced with barriers, when she was sitting in the gallery along with family members and the previous government said no to this bill. I told her: I will get this passed. I made a promise to her. I didn't know how, and I didn't know when, but I told her: even if I don't get re-elected, I make this promise to you that in some way I will get this bill passed. I'm proud to sit here today and say that this is a bill that, from my understanding, has the consent of everyone in this House. I look forward to voting on this.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I am proud of all involved. I'm proud of my friends from the previous opposition party when we were there and we fought: my friend from Calgary-Hays, who fought for this, and my friend from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and all those of us who were in opposition who knew that this was a bill that was just the right thing to do.

You know, I have so many anecdotal stories about my time as a police officer and the children that I've seen. I've seen things, sadly, that for sure would make a lot of people feel very, very uncomfortable. If I may do so, Mr. Speaker – I know I have a little bit of time here – I do remember a time where I had conducted this traffic stop at about 3 o'clock in the morning. It was a vehicle that matched the description of the person driving, and I remember phoning the RO and talking to this grandmother, and she said that her granddaughter was missing. I remember going to the guy who had the vehicle. I just wanted to know where the little girl was; that was my sole focus. I don't want to get into the nuances of the traffic stop, let's say, but, you know, he told me where the little girl was. She was in a crack house.

I remember saying to my sergeant at the time that I wasn't waiting for the tactical team. I really wasn't waiting for backup. It was just me and my partner. To me, it was a child at risk. I kicked in that door, and sure enough there was a little two-year-old girl surrounded by drugs and alcohol and everything that you imagine a crack house to be. She was there. Her diaper was full. I remember grabbing her, pulling her from that house, and we saved her. There were people in that house. There were users in that house. Of course, the drug dealer knew that she was there. It's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Every adult Albertan is now on notice. No longer will you be able to turn a blind eye to a child who is at risk. No longer will you be able to sit there and say: well, that wasn't my problem. There are consequences. There are consequences for ignoring child abuse. There are consequences for ignoring a person like that little two-year-old girl, who was in such a vulnerable state.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank everyone here for the support and kindness you have shown. Thank you.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:19 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Issik	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Savage
Bilous	LaGrange	Schulz
Carson	Loewen	Schweitzer
Copping	Loyola	Shandro
Ellis	McIver	Sigurdson, L.
Feehan	Nally	Toor
Getson	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Glubish	Pancholi	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Walker
Guthrie	Pitt	Williams
Hoffman	Reid	Yao
Horner	Renaud	Yaseen
Irwin		

Totals: For – 40 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 202 read a third time]

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Indigenous Consultation on Crown Land Sales

507. Mr. Feehan moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly, in recognition of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the traditional territory of indigenous peoples, urge the government to undertake robust consultation with indigenous communities prior to the sale of Crown land in northern Alberta and adopt a comprehensive consultation process as a standard for all future proposed Crown land sales.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to be here in the House this afternoon to speak to this motion. I know that people have had it in documents for some time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that we'll be talking a fair amount about the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples here over the next hour. I think that many people will know that under the previous government we had adopted the United Nations declaration and that we had given copies of the declaration to every single ministry as well as to all of our partners in the community – Treaty 6, Treaty 7, Treaty 8, the Métis Settlements General Council, the Métis Nation of Alberta, the friendship centres, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, and other groups – and asked all of those people to please look at government rules, regulations, legislation, policies, and practices in order to determine where we were not in line with the United Nations declaration.

As a result of that important work that we did, we were able to create many significant initiatives to enhance the well-being of indigenous people in this province, and it led to things, for example, like being the only province in the country who had put money into

bringing clean water to reserves, and also changing the school curriculum; offering training to all 27,000 members of the public service on indigenous histories, traditions, and cultures; and putting money into indigenous language retention in the community, amongst many others. People in the House have heard me mention a number of these things on many occasions. In fact, the list of things that we did to ensure that we were working more closely with the indigenous community was well over a hundred. I'm always happy for people to ask me about that. I certainly would take the time to read a list into the House if people were interested about the many things that we did.

On the other hand, on May 23 I rose in this House to ask the Minister of Indigenous Relations:

Does this government acknowledge the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the articles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people, which outline the right of indigenous people to free, prior, and informed consent with matters regarding their treaty rights outlined in treaties 6, 7, and 8?

At that time the minister rose in the House, and after some hesitation and perhaps confusion the minister replied:

Thank you for the question. I'll get back to you.

Here we are now, Mr. Speaker, some 150-plus days since that time he said that he'd get back to us, and we haven't heard a thing.

3:40

I think this is a great opportunity for members of the government side of the House to address this neglect of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I'm very concerned, however, that what I see coming from the government is not a respect for the United Nations declaration but, rather, a movement away from real and true reconciliation with the indigenous people and a change in policies that would enhance their well-being.

Here I have brought a motion into the House as an attempt to give them very specific action to take on the United Nations declaration. All they have to do is in one hour from now stand up and vote in favour of doing this. I have some concern as to whether or not that will happen given what I saw with the budget on Thursday, in which the Ministry of Indigenous Relations was effectively reduced by about 36 per cent, and of course, you know, my concern that overall the use of the word "reconciliation" by the government side of the House really is only used when they're seeking to co-opt the indigenous community in supporting their plans to provide handouts to their paymasters in Texas and Oklahoma.

But here's an opportunity for us to actually take specific action in this House to do something right, to read the articles of the United Nations declaration and to take very specific action that flows from specific requests by chiefs and councils in northern Alberta to have this kind of legislation in the House. I know, as I was the Minister of Indigenous Relations, both the intent and the specific idea of the motion before us in the House came directly from those chiefs and councils, so I feel somewhat comfortable in suggesting to the House that we should do that.

In order to give us some context here, I wish to read out a couple of the articles of the United Nations declaration so people will understand what it is that we are attempting to do here and what it is that the chiefs and councils are telling us is their expectation in terms of the nature of reconciliation in this province. Article 26 of the United Nations declaration reads that:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or

other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.

3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 27, the next one, is also very important and is readily available in the United Nations declaration. I'd be happy to provide members of the government with copies of the declaration if they'd like. Article 27 reads:

States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

I think that's very clear, Mr. Speaker, that around the world, as this document has been accepted by nations around the world, this is the expectation of relationships between settler nations and indigenous peoples. I'm very proud to remind the House that those words were largely written here in Alberta by many people, of course, and one of the primary movers being Grand Chief Willie Littlechild, who has been cited as a friend of the Minister of Indigenous Relations on more than one occasion.

So I would hope that there'd be pride in the words written by the very people who are now asking you to support this kind of motion. This is what you've been asked. This has been accepted around the world, and you would be in union with the most progressive, advanced governments around the world if you were to do this. It means that there is a requirement that the government consult with indigenous people prior to making decisions about Crown land sales in treaties 6, 7, and 8.

Unfortunately, I have another piece to address because I've recently received a copy of a letter from Grand Chief Arthur Noskey of Treaty 8, dated October 18, 2019, that expresses serious concern that this government has failed to adhere to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, which I will of course submit to the House in due time. The letter reads in part:

We expect that no resources will be extracted from Treaty 8 without our free, prior and informed consent and that our Nations will directly benefit from and remain involved in the management and protection of our territories. We also expect the Crown to act in accordance with the spirit and intent of our Treaty relationship, and to fulfill its obligations pursuant to section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This includes attempting to justify infringements of our Treaty rights, and consulting with us prior to decisions which could affect both our Treaty rights and our unextinguished inherent Aboriginal rights.

The reason for this letter was the discovery by the nations of a request for proposals regarding deciduous timber allocations in the north, which have been ignored by this government.

The Speaker: Are there others wishing to join the debate today on Motion 507? The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to get up and speak to this motion here today. I guess, first of all, I want to say that I appreciate the intent of what the hon. member is bringing forward here.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about the processes going on right now with indigenous consultation. Indigenous consultation is a

distinctive and ongoing process that is initiated in the preplanning stage and continues through the regional plan development process. The government of Alberta recognizes and respects that those indigenous communities that hold constitutionally protected rights are uniquely positioned to inform land-use planning.

The Land Use Secretariat maintains ongoing consultation engagement forums with First Nations and Métis organizations in the South Saskatchewan, North Saskatchewan, lower Athabasca, and north Peace regions. These forums are designed to facilitate early and ongoing consultation on the development and implementation of regional plans as well as land and environmental issues. In accordance with the government of Alberta's First Nations and Métis settlements consultation policy the government consults with First Nations and Métis settlements on decisions that may potentially affect their ability to practise their treaty rights and aboriginal rights.

Mr. Speaker, we also think back here to just a short time ago when this government brought in the indigenous opportunities corporation to provide real opportunity for First Nations to have involvement in resource development. It also, I think, brought real change to the relationship between the Alberta government and First Nations.

Now, I guess, at this time I would like to bring forward an amendment. I want to make sure that the hon. member understands that in bringing forward this amendment, we'd like to ensure that this amendment is representative of the intent of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley, if you'd just hold your comments – we'll stop your clock here – so I can grab a copy of the amendment, then I'll ask you to proceed in just a couple of moments.

Please proceed, Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. I move that Motion Other than Government Motion 507 be amended by striking out “, in recognition of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the traditional territory of indigenous peoples, urge the government to undertake robust consultation” and substituting “urge the government to continue robust consultation” and by striking out “Crown land in northern Alberta and adopt a comprehensive consultation process” and substituting “Crown land in Alberta and maintain a comprehensive consultation process.”

3:50

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that what we'd like to do here today is to actually strengthen this motion, and I think we can agree that by making these changes, we have an opportunity to make this motion even better and stronger. Now, never have I doubted the sincerity in the hon. member's care and concern for First Nations – he speaks passionately about them every time he speaks about First Nations in this House – but I think there's an opportunity to make sure that we in Alberta here have control and responsibility of the consultation process and that we don't hand that off to any other organization, that we take ownership of it right here in Alberta. I think we can all agree that consultation should be done across Alberta when we're dealing with public lands, not just northern Alberta, and I think that, obviously, the hon. member would agree with that.

Now, I just want to read article 37(2) from the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. It says, “Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as diminishing or eliminating the rights of indigenous peoples contained in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.” I think we would have to agree that we here have agreements. We have constructive

arrangements and treaties with the First Nations people. So I think we are quite in line with the intent of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I think that if there are any changes we need to do with consultation with First Nations, then we can do that right here in Alberta and in this Legislature.

I would encourage all members and encourage the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to consider this amendment as a friendly amendment, as something that we hope will help strengthen this motion and help make it more acceptable – I shouldn't say "more acceptable" but, I guess, stronger – and help it as far as helping our processes with indigenous peoples in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford rising, presumably to speak to the amendment as he's already spoken to the main motion.

Speaker's Ruling Admissibility of Amendments

The Speaker: Hon. members will know that we are in the middle of private members' business, and amendments on private members' business are not as common as otherwise amended motions inside the Assembly. I am reluctant to proceed with debate on an amendment prior to having a sense – in 2007 Speaker Kowalski identified the need for private members' business to, in fact, just be that, so amending a private member's motion is somewhat of a unique circumstance. Some of you may recall, in 2016, when the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays had moved a motion on I believe it was choice in education at the time, and there was some significant discussion around that amendment.

I have reviewed the amendment. Certainly, Parliamentary Counsel would rule that this amendment is, in fact, technically in order as it is not a direct negative. It doesn't change the opposite of the motion. Having said that, it certainly makes some significant changes to what perhaps the member intended when he moved the motion.

All members, including government members, will know that it is the Speaker's job to defend the private members inside this Assembly. All members will also know that private members' motions only come around every number of years. There have been a number of rulings specifically on cases just like this, and I appreciate the hon. member's comments with respect to the intent of the motion and certainly the intent around – I appreciate his comments. Of course, the Speaker is indifferent on the content of the motion, merely the process of the motion today.

I'd like to point out just a couple of ways that this type of situation has been handled in the past, including in March '99, which can be found on page 273 of *Alberta Hansard* from that day, when the Deputy Speaker actually ruled that an amendment that was inconsistent with the limited amount of time that we have to debate the motion was, in fact, out of order and was not proceeded upon.

I also recognize that the authority to move this type of amendment can be found at 567 of *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition. To amend a private member's motion must be carefully considered by the chair in terms of content and purpose.

Speaker Kowalski in 2007 ruled on an amendment to a private member's motion, and you can find this ruling on page 351 of *Hansard* for that day. In considering whether or not to allow that amendment to go forward, Speaker Kowalski went on at some length, as is your Speaker today, it would seem. This is quoting from page 351 of *Hansard*.

The chair has looked at that, heard the words, and basically is of the view that the amendment does change the intent of the motion.

In keeping with tradition, particularly since 1997, while I've had the privilege of [serving as] your Speaker, a great deal of deference is shown by the chair to the position of private members and the business of private members.

I would like to reiterate Speaker Kowalski's comments that, frankly, I am indifferent to the motion that has been moved here today. In keeping with tradition, particularly since 1997, when he had the privilege of serving as the Speaker, this indifference is important with respect to private members' business.

There's limited opportunity for members to have their motions considered by the Assembly. Even prior to the arrival of [him] . . . in 1993, when major amendments were made to the Standing Orders, there was a spirit of those amendments that the work and the advocacy of [their] private members was to be paramount in the Assembly. Successive Speakers have limited the scope of acceptable amendments to private members' motions so that their intent is not substantially [changed].

He went on to mention the ruling, that I already mentioned, in 1999. At that time, in 2007, the Speaker of the day said:

The solution that the chair would suggest would be that the chair would ask the member for St. Albert, the sponsor of the motion . . .

In this case, obviously, it's the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

. . . to advise whether he is of the view that the amendment is in keeping with the intent of his motion. If he agrees and advises the chair that the amendment is in keeping with [his] intent . . . then the chair would be inclined to allow the amendment to be moved [as presented] and it would be subject to debate and subject to a vote on the floor.

I think that in keeping with the traditions of the Assembly and upholding a private member's ability to move a motion in which they believe in the intent, it would be reasonable for the Assembly to consider the position of Speaker Kowalski when he asked if the private member believed that the amendment would then, in fact, keep with the intent of the motion.

So I put the question to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford: are you of the opinion that the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley keeps with the intent of the motion as you, a private member, have provided here in the Assembly today? I am not interested in debate on the amendment, merely on whether or not you believe it keeps with your intent.

4:00

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to address the question that you put before me. I can simply say that I do not believe that this reflects my intent as there are two pieces to the motion, both of which have been eliminated by the amendment. I think that the recognition of the United Nations declaration is inherent in the nature of the motion, which has been eliminated by this amendment. Secondly, it suggests that no ongoing, consistent, collaborative framework be established for work in the future but simply maintains the historical record, which, frankly, in this province has not been very strong.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm prepared to rule as to whether the amendment is in order or not. Members, it is imperative for your Speaker that we protect the intention of private members' business. While I also appreciate and respect the position that the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has taken, he too as a private member has every opportunity to move amendments as they impact private members' business. I think it is also imperative that we keep with the long-standing tradition of not allowing private members' motions to significantly be changed through amendment, for us to be able to debate the intention of each member, and it's my hope that future Speakers will continue to defend this principle and allow motions

that have been presented by private members to be debated in the great tradition of our parliamentary democracy.

While I am certain not all members will agree with my decision today, it is my decision to rule the amendment out of order, and we will continue to proceed with the motion as it was presented before the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has seven minutes and 35 seconds remaining in his debate. Is that not correct? Correction: the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has four minutes remaining in his debate.

Debate Continued

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I respect your decision there, of course. I am a little disappointed that the hon. member didn't feel that this was in keeping with his motion as far as the intention, because I think what we're talking about here is consultation. When we talk about indigenous consultation and that process that we go through, again, I think that if there was anything that we were lacking, I guess, in Alberta as far as consultation with First Nations, we could have dealt with that just on its own, without a motion like this one here. Now, obviously, if there was anything lacking in consultation, I would have thought that the members opposite would have probably taken care of that in the last four years, when they were in government.

Again, I think it's important to note that there's no lack of desire on this side of the House as far as consultation. We know that consultation with First Nations is important. We know it has to be done appropriately. The process that we have in place now: obviously, the previous government used it, too.

It's important, too, that we in Alberta have unique circumstances here that I think we can recognize, and by having these unique circumstances, I think we can develop and work with over time our consultation process to make sure it's acceptable to all parties. I think we have that opportunity here. We know that it's an ongoing process, and it's done right from the preplanning stage. You know, when it comes to a regional plan development process, it's done in a preplanning stage and continues on.

We know that indigenous communities hold constitutionally protected rights, and we know also that they have unique positions to bring forward when it comes to the consultation and, of course, to land use in their traditional areas. We know we have to respect that. We know we have to have the opportunity for them to be listened to and to have that opportunity to speak freely on what they feel about the processes as they go along and, of course, as the land use is decided.

I'd just kind of go back to what it says in the motion about northern Alberta. I guess that when I look at that, you know, I'm not sure what the intent is here in this motion, where it's going to exclude southern Alberta, western Alberta, eastern Alberta. I don't even know, maybe, what the definition of northern Alberta is. I guess I'm a little concerned that this motion is actually limiting the process of consultation and the importance of consultation as we move forward.

You know, I think we can all agree here today that consultation is important. I think we can all agree that by the amendments that were brought forward, we would be able to have that consultation going forward and actually strengthen that.

Now, if we look at even the Land Use Secretariat, they maintain ongoing consultation and engagement forums with First Nations and Métis organizations, so I think there's a lot of, you know, good consultation going on right now. Do we need to work on it? We need to work on it going forward also.

Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Admissibility of Amendments

The Speaker: Hon. members, if I could just provide a little bit of clarity with respect to the process moving forward. The amendment that has been circulated, obviously, has been ruled out of order and so, as such, will not be debated on or voted on. We will be voting on Motion 507 as it was read into the record by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, obviously assuming that no other amendments are moved with respect to that motion that may be slightly different.

With that said, we will proceed on debate, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

Debate Continued

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in support of Motion 507, brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford. I certainly express my wholehearted support for this motion, and I do urge all members in the Assembly to do so as well. I actually think this is an opportunity for the government in particular to demonstrate their true commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

As my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford indicated, that question was put forward to the Minister of Indigenous Relations. Unfortunately, we have yet to receive a response on that question although I do note that within the platform for the governing party they did express a commitment to UNDRIP, as it's called. Yet we did not hear unequivocal support for that from the Minister of Indigenous Relations. What we are seeing is unequivocal support for the principles set out in UNDRIP as put forward in this motion by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

In particular, my colleague put forward a very clear example – and it's a very immediate and current example – of why this is necessary. Why this is necessary is in the letter – I'm just going to carry on from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford's comments – from Arthur Noskey, who is the chief of Treaty 8. He spoke to the very issue which is the heart of this motion, which is that to date the government has not shown a commitment to reconciliation and to UNDRIP with respect to how it is seeking to dispose of Crown lands in northern Alberta.

In particular, this relates to an RFP that was issued regarding deciduous timber allocations within the territories of the Lubicon Lake and Loon River First Nations. These are not our words; these are actually the words of Chief Noskey from Treaty 8, who sent out this letter, sent it to the government, indicating:

The fact that the RFP includes, in its criteria, consideration of proposals which include Indigenous partnerships, exacerbates this issue. In the absence of respectful consultation, decisions to accept proposals based on the support of individual Indigenous communities is divisive and dishonourable.

That's because, in that context, Chief Noskey is putting forward that there was no consultation done with those First Nations with respect to the RFP that was issued on this land.

4:10

So this government has a little bit of work, some work, to do already although only being six months into their term. We've seen the Minister of Indigenous Relations stand up and, you know, express his support and have indigenous members in our gallery and indicate that this government is committed to reconciliation. Yet while they make these grand statements in the House, what we're seeing is that that is not carried through in their actions with

respect to disposition of lands and Crown lands and how they are consulting with First Nations.

It would have been preferable to not have to bring this motion forward. The Crown, as it is expected to when dealing in consultation, is expected to act honourably. Had the Crown acted honourably on this issue, the motion would be unnecessary. But I think we are seeing that there is a very clear example of the fact that the First Nations, particularly in northern Alberta, are not feeling like they are being properly consulted with when it comes to the disposition of their lands. I'd put forward again that this government has stated in their platform that they support UNDRIP, but we have not yet had a clear statement of support from the minister.

I can say that with respect to even the budget that we saw rolled out last Thursday, again, it's really easy – and I think governments have done this for centuries in this country and in this province – to give lip service to reconciliation and lip service to treating First Nations and indigenous communities with respect but then doing something else when it comes to actually making decisions. We see that in the budget that was brought forward from this government just last Thursday, a significant rollback with respect to Indigenous Relations. I believe the budget was cut by 10.8 per cent, and at the end of the term of the budget it will be reduced by 17.4 per cent.

Many programs that other ministries offered and that indigenous people were profiting from were also cut. In fact, I'll give an example from my own critic area, which is Children's Services. You know, I note that as part of the business plan for Children's Services under the previous government a commitment to UNDRIP and to reconciliation and to working with indigenous communities was right in the business plan. I think it is quite remarkable that the first business plan issued for Children's Services from this minister is silent. In fact, UNDRIP is removed. In fact, there are very few clear strategies targeted at reconciliation or working with indigenous communities.

Again, I say that it's been very moving to see the Minister of Indigenous Relations come into this House and welcome members from indigenous communities here and raise a red dress in the lobby of the Federal Building, but those are just symbolic actions. What we need to see, what indigenous communities deserve and, in fact, have an entitlement to is true reconciliation and true consultation. We know that that is already not happening.

I think this should be an opportunity, that I hope the government will take, to demonstrate their true commitment to the principles set out in UNDRIP and to establish a comprehensive process. We know that the consultation process that has been carried out thus far with respect to this particular RFP has not been a true consultation process. To suggest that we just need to continue what we're already doing: well, you know, we've got this letter from Chief Noskey saying that, no, you're actually not consulting. So we should not be doing what you've been doing. We should actually enter into true reconciliation and true consultation, which under UNDRIP requires that there is robust consultation with indigenous communities prior to the sale of Crown land and that there needs to be a comprehensive process.

You know, my experience to date with respect to indigenous issues has been when I worked within the Ministry of Education, Alberta Education. I worked with treaty areas 6, 7, and 8 and the federal government on developing a memorandum of understanding with respect to First Nations education in Alberta. I was brand new to that area of work. I can tell you that the very first lesson I learned and the most important lesson I learned was to listen. We all have an obligation to do that, particularly if we're truly talking about reconciliation. We know that that is what indigenous peoples in this province, in this country have been saying for centuries, that it is our obligation to listen, and to listen means true consultation and truly engaging with those communities.

We're hearing that this government is not embarking on true consultation and is not listening to the communities when they're talking about disposing of Crown land. This is an opportunity for the government to recommit itself – they've said it in their platform; they haven't said much since – in a concrete way to reconciliation and to actually listening to indigenous communities and to committing itself to the principles set out in the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

I am proud to support this motion brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford. I think it is demonstrative of a continuation of the commitment he has demonstrated for years to indigenous peoples in our province and how he fulfilled his obligations as Minister of Indigenous Relations when he was part of cabinet. This is just the continuation of that commitment. I think it would be beneficial for this entire Assembly to commit to those principles set out in UNDRIP in a clear and unequivocal way. I'm proud to vote in support of this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Motion 507 this afternoon. Thank you to the member opposite for his concern on this issue. The hon. member has crafted a motion that speaks specifically to the government's commitment to consult on Crown land for agricultural land. I've had this conversation with indigenous leaders who are also concerned about how Crown lands could be used, especially as it concerns treaty rights or traditional use of lands, and I can appreciate that concern.

Our government has been clear about our priorities: jobs, economy, and pipelines. Budget 2019 confirms those priorities, but it does another thing, too, Madam Speaker. It manifests a commitment to indigenous peoples as partners in Alberta's prosperity through initiatives like the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation and our litigation fund. We're solidifying a commitment to reconciliation by paving the path with real actions that will help more indigenous communities benefit from Alberta's renewed economy. The reality is that the policies and legislation by successive governments have kept these communities dependent by restricting their opportunities for economic security. I would like to explore this motion from the perspective of partnerships and prosperity with indigenous communities.

Madam Speaker, Alberta is good at many things, and one of them is upholding the duty to consult. My ministry, as the hon. member knows, has the aboriginal consultation office, which is dedicated to working with land-based indigenous communities and industry members to be sure there is appropriate consultation on development projects that could disturb the land in ways that affect treaty settlement rights. We go further by also considering traditional uses and Métis settlement members' harvesting or traditional use activities. We consult with First Nations and Métis settlements before making decisions on land and natural resource management. This is vital, especially when community members depend on hunting, fishing, and trapping in order to survive. Yes, this is a constitutional right, and it is a matter of dignity and of worth.

I and my staff have worked hard and continue to work hard to earn and hold the trust of indigenous leaders even while having the courage to make difficult decisions for the future of everyone in this province. Reviewing or creating protocol agreements was one of the first actions we embarked on, Madam Speaker, and we are upholding our framework agreements with the Métis people as well. Why did we organize a full government-to-government meeting with First Nation chiefs in June, not even 50 days into this government's mandate? It's because our commitment is strong.

We are moving forward as partners. When the Premier announced Bill 14, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, he was surrounded by indigenous government and business leaders. Do you know why that was, Madam Speaker? Because they want to be partners with this government, because they know we are willing to move beyond the rhetoric to take real action so that indigenous people can truly be partners in prosperity.

With respect to the hon. member and his motion, this government's practice is robust consultation with indigenous communities when their rights and uses could be harmed. Every land sale and exchange transaction does include an assessment about whether consultation needs to happen before decisions are made. Madam Speaker, the Supreme Court made a decision in the Mikisew Cree First Nation versus Canada case clarifying a requirement for consultation where there is taking up of Crown land upon which First Nations have access to exercise treaty rights. Being able to exercise these rights is a part of a community's prosperity, and we want to be sure that they have a chance to take it even further through opportunities to participate as owners and investors of major natural resource development projects.

4:20

My colleague the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks is responsible for administering Crown land for sales for agriculture. His ministry has established processes to assess and determine consultation requirements about this kind of land sale. His staff work with my staff, and they seek advice from the constitutional and aboriginal law team with the Ministry of Justice and the Solicitor General. Madam Speaker, we have processes in place. This government is committed to honouring our constitutional obligations, which include the duty to consult, and we will always ensure that Alberta fulfills its duties under the honour of the Crown to consult with First Nations and Métis settlements. Moreover, our government is strongly advocating for a consultation process that provides clear timelines and legal certainty for project proponents to promote economic development. We are working to strengthen the consultation process to consider support from indigenous communities for projects that affect them.

We respect First Nations' efforts to urge the federal government to work collaboratively on matters that concern them. One of our platform commitments is to advocate for the federal government to pursue a consultation framework and policy that aligns with Alberta's nation-leading consultation policy. In this way, Canada will be encouraged to continue its path towards economic reconciliation while fostering investor confidence and legal certainty.

This motion is another attempt by the opposition to bring forward an issue that they promised but failed to address in the previous government. The NDP campaigned on implementing the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples in 2015 but failed to implement it because of the inherent concerns on how it would impact Alberta's economy.

The fact is that our policies and practices already align with UNDRIP insofar as we seek input from indigenous communities prior to making any decisions on land and natural resource management. We are deeply committed to our relationship with the indigenous people of this province. We continue to uphold our government's constitutional obligation to consult with indigenous peoples, and we are committed to the mutual prosperity of indigenous peoples alongside all Albertans. Although I agree with the intent of the motion, we do consult with all indigenous peoples, not just in northern Alberta, so that's why I'll be voting against this.

Thank you.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the mover, my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford, for bringing forward this important debate for consideration today. I'm going to try to step back a little bit from where we are and just tell a little bit about – first of all, I think that most people know northern Alberta when they're in it. I think that if anyone is concerned about how to define northern Alberta, certainly the Northern Alberta Development Council has a region that it's responsible for. That's a government agency that's been created. There are definitely folks that receive a northern living allowance. I think that we have many times where we've defined the north.

I actually don't think we need to worry about defining the north or about whether or not the north is enough. I think that what we're debating today is whether or not to pass this motion, which speaks specifically to one region, northern Alberta. Certainly, it would be becoming of the government if they chose to expand it even further than that, as the Member for Central Peace-Notley spoke to earlier. It would certainly not be in breach of this motion to exercise the same practice in other parts of the province. But I don't think that we need to debate what is northern Alberta and what isn't northern Alberta. I think there are lots of folks that have defined that in the past.

Again, I want to go back to what brought this about, and that was in December 2018 the great concern and frustration felt by many folks in northern Alberta around blanket statements about selling Crown land without acknowledging the treaties that that land is a part of and without acknowledging the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. For those points, I think that the wording of the motion is certainly appropriate for us to be considering here today.

I grew up – many of you have probably heard, but I'll tell you one more time – in Kinuso in northern Alberta, about 50 kilometres west of Slave Lake, just south of the southern shore of Lesser Slave Lake. The neighbouring First Nation is Swan River First Nation. I literally could see Swan River from my house. We spent a lot of time between Kinuso and Swan River as students engaging with one another. Part of the history of Kinuso, as I understand it – and if I'm wrong, I'd be happy to have Alberta historians set the record straight for me – is that the railway line was supposed to run along the north shore of Lesser Slave Lake. It was going to stop at Grouard. Grouard was actually set to become the provincial capital, so rather than Edmonton being the provincial capital, Grouard was supposed to be the provincial capital.

But when the railway came through – there are a bunch of stories about what the political motivations were, what the personal and economic motivations were. They decided instead to go along the south flank of the lake, not exactly along the lake but south along much of the lake. As a result, Swan River had a railway come through the middle of the First Nation, and Kinuso later was established as a provincial settlement to serve that region. This is one example back in history of why consultation is so important. The fact that there failed to be consultation, from, again, the reports that I received growing up in the community over those many years, is exactly why the geography of that part of the province came into existence. Whether or not it was the right decision, it was a decision that was made. But I think there are opportunities for us to reflect on how we make decisions and how best to live up to an international standard, that being the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, something that was an international standard that's been set and that indigenous people in leadership positions across Alberta

have told us is important for us to achieve here in the province of Alberta.

I also want to say that the traditional right to harvest and to engage with Crown land is something that I don't take lightly and that I know the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford doesn't take lightly, and that's why he brought forward this motion. The fact that he has wording in it that specifically speaks to achieving the standard of the declaration and having fair and thorough consultation I think is absolutely critical.

I think that if the government wants to achieve what they put on the cover of many documents around jobs, economy, and pipelines, if they do it in conflict with indigenous communities and with indigenous people, it won't get us to the finish line. I think that the only way that we achieve those outcomes is by following the letter of the law, following the intent of declarations like UNDRIP, and making sure that we work in full partnership. I think that the more we see governments choose to make announcements without actually considering the legal and very real consequences of breaking treaties or breaking the UN declaration or breaking other established pieces of law, we will put ourselves in a more vulnerable position on those three pieces, that seem to be part of the focus of this government at this time.

For those reasons, I'm really proud to support the motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Perfect. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proud as well to rise to speak to this motion. I just have to point out as well that I'm so proud to support the work of my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford. You know, I wasn't, obviously, in government in the last term, but I was able to see his work as our Indigenous Relations minister and just how passionate he was about it, and he continues to be passionate in his current role.

One of the things that I want to talk about is just the importance of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I worked for years with Alberta Education, and I was really, really proud of the NDP government's work at the time to ensure that UNDRIP was fully implemented across ministries. I know there was a lot – a lot – of work that went into that, a very clear analysis. In Alberta Education we looked at the role of UNDRIP as well as the commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the areas of curriculum, for instance, and of course in the areas of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education. My world was curriculum, and I was really proud to just see the movement that we were making on this.

As we saw from the amendment that was introduced, I'm a little bit worried that some of that work is very much in jeopardy. As my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud pointed out, we're seeing references to UNDRIP being dropped in various ministries. I haven't done a full analysis across ministries, but knowing that it's already been dropped in Children's Services is alarming. A quick scan of the Indigenous Relations business plan pointed out that it's in there once, which I think is a shift as well from previous business plans. I'm quite concerned about that.

4:30

I want to as well refer to the letter that my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford pointed out. This was from Chief Arthur Noskey, the grand chief of Treaty 8. He points out: we expect that no resources will be extracted from Treaty 8 without our free, prior,

and informed consent. He goes on to talk about the importance of, you know, a nation-to-nation relationship. We've heard this government talking a lot about the importance of consultation and relationships and really building a commitment together, yet we're already seeing – this letter is dated October 18, by the way. We know that the Alberta indigenous opportunities corporation was announced just prior to this letter, so just days – just days, mere days – after the conversations around the AIOC, the Treaty 8 grand chief and some of the other nations are feeling rejected, feeling neglected by this government. This should be quite concerning to all members of this House.

I'm not going to speak too much longer on this, but I really want to just hammer home the point that this government speaks a big game about consultation; it's time to prove it. This government speaks a big game about reconciliation; it's time to prove it. They've said multiple times recently in this House that they're focused on indigenous economic opportunities and true partnerships; it's time to prove it.

One of the things as we go into budget consultations here: we have seen a significant reduction in the Indigenous Relations ministry's budget. My colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford can speak a lot more about this, but so many of the programs that the NDP government was so proud to put forward, including everything under the indigenous climate leadership plan, are now either cancelled or in jeopardy. I find it curious that, you know, again, this government opposite speaks this big game, yet all the actions they've taken since this minister rose in the House and spoke about reconciliation and his commitments have proven otherwise.

I think that by supporting this motion, they'll be able to mend some of those relationships and show that they really are committed to reconciliation and consultation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Member Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to applaud the work of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford because, of course, he's been so incredibly dedicated to issues involving indigenous people in the province of Alberta when he was Minister of Indigenous Relations and now continues to work on exactly that, being in opposition.

I want to applaud him for that because he's very dedicated to a very important principle, and that is maintaining relationships with indigenous people. The reason why I bring that up specifically is because for far too long historically, not only here in the province of Alberta but across this great land, the relationship with indigenous people has been a paternalistic one. Even the imposition of governance of chiefs and councils was one imposed by the nation of Canada or, better stated, by the Crown on indigenous people even before Canada was a nation. This is something that's so important to understand because, within that whole historical perspective, the relationship that existed not only was a paternalistic one, but it was also one that marginalized people.

I would be remiss to remind this entire House that the whole reservation system imposed here in Canada was one that was attempted to be redone in South Africa under the apartheid system. I want us all to think about that for a second.

Now, of course, historically speaking, when the treaties were signed – and I'll put a parenthesis in there. I've spoken to so many indigenous members of different communities. When you bring up the treaty, it's kind of a love-hate relationship with the treaty. Of course, the treaty that was signed on to by so many indigenous communities and by the Crown has so many great things written

inside of it. But at the same time, those same members of the community will tell you that those treaties were never upheld or respected.

That's what UNDRIP is really all about. UNDRIP attempts to rectify the fact that these treaties, although idealistic in nature in what is written within them and what was agreed upon by representatives of these communities, were never actually upheld. Because of that, indigenous people had to organize on a world scale, and I'm not just talking about here in Canada or even the United States. Indigenous people organized all over the world, went to the United Nations and decided, worked feverishly to really understand and really establish how their rights could be respected and, through the body that is known as the United Nations, developed what we now know as the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

It just seems so awkward and strange to me that this government and, historically speaking, traditionally Conservative governments regularly do not want to recognize declarations made by the United Nations. I don't know why. We're talking about individuals that have worked all over the world to really understand how the rights of individuals could be respected and not only the rights of individuals but the rights of communities, of groups. Now, I understand that within the Conservative framework and mindset and perspective they stand up wholeheartedly when it comes to the rights of the individual, and that's to be applauded. It's great. It's wonderful. But also within human rights are the collective rights of communities.

Indigenous people have a different perspective than those who carry a more Eurocentric perspective of rights, and that has to do with the rights of communities, and it starts with the right of the land. Now, indigenous communities – maybe you've heard it before; maybe you haven't – don't think of ownership of the land held by people because the relationship that exists spiritually, a cosmological understanding of the relationship that exists between people and the land, is actually one that has nothing to do with ownership. It's a reciprocal relationship, one where we don't own the land, but in fact it's Mother Earth that has more control over us as people than we have over her. This kind of really turns the whole Eurocentric perspective upon its head, head over heels. Now, we may not agree with it, but that doesn't mean that we cannot choose to at least listen to indigenous people and choose to understand the perspective from which they are coming. I personally really like the perspective of indigenous people of not really owning the land.

You know, we've seen this come through lately, more and more, through communities here, not only in the province of Alberta but all over North America, this whole understanding of stewardship, that we have a responsibility to take care of the land. This is something that I believe has come through that indigenous cosmology and understanding and perspective and has been shared with so many communities around the world. Now we can all share in this perspective: okay; if you want to say that you own that piece of land, you own it, but more important than owning that piece of land, you have the responsibility of taking care of it and making sure that people will be able to continue to live on it for generations.

Again I want to applaud the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for his continued work and advocacy on all of this. I would just like to finish by saying to all members of this House: please support this motion. Let's continue to look more deep into this and what we can do to actually work with indigenous communities as has been described in the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Please support this motion.

Thank you.

4:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. government whip.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to propose a motion to move to one-minute bells not only for this vote but for the remainder of the afternoon as well.

[Motion carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise to speak to Motion Other than Government Motion 507, of course, proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I just want to quickly go over this again.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly, in recognition of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the traditional territory of indigenous peoples, urge the government to undertake robust consultation with indigenous communities prior to the sale of Crown land . . . and adopt a comprehensive consultation process as a standard for all future proposed Crown land [sites].

I think that is a very reasonable motion, a motion that I plan to support.

I would also just like to take a moment to thank the Speaker for ruling the previous amendment to this motion out of order because I do believe that it completely changed the intent of this motion before us. Thank you for that.

I did also just want to point out, not specifically concerns with that amendment but something that was said by the Member for Central Peace-Notley and the fact that just looking at the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act and that member's statement that – I don't have the Blues in front of me, but it was essentially that things have gotten a lot better since this new government has come in because of the program like the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act. I take great concern with that because we have not actually seen how that program has rolled out, first of all.

Second of all, we have not seen any money within the 2019 budget committed to that program, and that was a concern that was brought up by the Beaver First Nation chief in conversations with the media recently as this budget rolled out, I believe. In the *Toronto Sun* it quoted that chief saying: we knew it was coming, the budget was coming; just like the universities were ready, we're ready, and that's why we can never have a true relationship with the province . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than government motion to close debate, I would like to invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to close debate on Motion 507.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to close debate. I really, truly appreciate the opportunity to have private members' bills brought forward, and I would like to thank the Speaker for protecting that great tradition here in the House from assault by the government side. I'm glad that we're here actually debating the motion as put forward.

I did have an opportunity to listen to some of the comments from the other side of the House. I'm afraid that the minister said a number of things that I thought could be misinterpreted by listeners who are acquainted with the facts, so I think that we need to spend a little bit of time being really clear that consultation as it is

happening in the province today with regard to land sales is not adequate. We have letters from the chief here indicating what their concerns were because, for example, in this case, this one particular incident which he refers to, there was no consultation at all. I think that to suggest that we have a robust process as it exists right now is inaccurate, as demonstrated by the comments made by the chiefs in the northern communities.

I just want to, you know, talk about the fact that they have a reason to be concerned. There have been previous land sales in the north under the Conservative government where there was no consultation whatsoever, which is why I'm bringing this forward. I am reflecting the things that I was told repeatedly as Minister of Indigenous Relations. Essentially, the history of the Conservative government has been to break the trust of the indigenous peoples.

The previous land sales that occurred did occur in the area surrounding the Dene, the Beaver, the Tallcree, the Little Red First Nations without any consultation at all, and they had a lot of effect on those communities because the loss of the land was significant in their ability to engage in the practices which they've been doing since time immemorial. It was significant for hunting, for the gathering of medicines, for engaging in teaching and ceremony. The land is now turned into farmland, which denies the indigenous people the right of entry and significantly intrudes on the landscape not only for the indigenous people, of course, but for the wildlife that use that land: the deer, the moose, the caribou, and other animals.

It's very much a concern here because if this land is taken out of Crown land, then we have a problem where not only are we not consulting appropriately with indigenous people – they are telling us that we are not consulting appropriately – but it also affects their ability to fulfill their treaty land entitlements, and we know that there are some that are presently being pursued in northern Alberta.

Under the natural resources transfer acts you can only transfer lands for treaty land entitlement that are unencumbered, and this province is about to encumber a bunch of land. That means that land that should be considered first and primarily for First Nations to fulfill our obligations under the NRTA is being taken out of consideration, making it impossible for them to fulfill their rights here in this province, and I'm very concerned about that.

I know that the minister mentioned that we do have the ACO, the aboriginal consultation office, but he did not remind the audience, the people that are listening, that the ACO does not consult on land sales. Now, the fact that he brought up the ACO I think is important because what we're saying here is that we should have a robust process for consultation on land sales when we already know we have a consultation process with regard to resource development. It was mentioned by the minister himself for that exact purpose, so we know what a proper consultation process is. We know that indigenous people are given an opportunity to respond to concerns and to have their voices heard in a very particular, defined protocol. We know that does not occur for land sales, so to suggest that somehow land sales are covered by the ACO or by a process even close to the ACO process is perhaps a bit of playing with the truth as we know it.

I would like to suggest to this government that it is important that they take this to heart, that they adopt the United Nations declaration and that they develop a robust process.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 507 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:50 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Loyola	Renaud
Feehan	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Ganley		

Against the motion:

Allard	Lovely	Toews
Copping	Nally	Toor
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Walker
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Issik	Rutherford	Wilson
Jones	Savage	Yao
LaGrange	Shandro	Yaseen
Loewen	Smith	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 29
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 lost]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 18 Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019

The Chair: Are there any more speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and have another opportunity to speak to Bill 18. I think I last spoke to this bill in an amendment. With respect to my position on the bill, I think I laid it out there, but I'll lay it out here again. I am definitely not in favour.

I think, again, the reasons I've laid out for not being in favour of this bill are that this creates a market that is significantly more volatile, and that's problematic for people. It's not just that it's going to cost people more overall to move back to the energy-only market. It's that it also increases unpredictability. If you're a family struggling to make it by, which a lot of people right up to the middle class are these days, it can be a real challenge to have that kind of volatility because it makes it very challenging to budget when you don't know what you're going to expect in terms of your electricity costs. In the past, with the energy-only market, we've seen some fairly wild fluctuations. Certainly, the advice that we received – again, the department officials were very, very good, and I'm sure the same goes here in terms of briefing folks on this – is that that volatility was only going to increase as time went on. So I think that that's a real concern.

I know that energy markets seem like a thing that's incredibly complicated, but that's why we're here to do this work. That's why we're to do this work as government, in part to communicate to the public about what it is that's occurring in this place. This bill takes us from a capacity market, which is the standard in North America. It's really only Texas that has this energy-only market remaining in terms of North American jurisdictions, of which there are, obviously,

a significant number. There's a reason for that. It's because it costs more, and it's because of the volatility.

I think that what frustrates me about this is that it's attempting to be sold as competition, but it isn't actually a competition. It's the illusion of competition because, as is taught still to this day, I imagine, in most introductory economic courses, electricity tends to be a natural monopoly because of the incredibly high cost of investing in the infrastructure. That tends to create amalgamations; it doesn't tend to create competition, which is what it's taught as an example of. The electricity market is taught as an example of a natural monopoly because it's sort of a market failure because the cost to get into the market is so very high.

In fact, that is the case in Alberta, or at least it was previously in the energy-only market. Essentially, the folks that retail it are buying from – we've added another level, so we don't actually have that much competition amongst those who generate. The competition is sort of illusory in the sense that it's just the retailers that are permitted to sell the power that are buying it from exactly the same source, so their sort of ability to impact the price is pretty limited. I think that that's a big concern.

You know, if we're selling this as, "Hooray. Competition," well, that's not really what it is. Like I've said, one of the things that concerns me about this is the way the contracts were signed, the fact that they were hidden, and the fact that they contain a guaranteed rate of interest which is accessible only to some and not to others, which is always something that frustrates me about the world. When certain folks who have access to more capital or who have more access to more money or had the right connections happen to have access to a higher rate of interest or a special deal compared to other people, that bothers me. It always has bothered me. It's one of the reasons I got into this. That is the frustration. The frustration is that this is illusory competition. There's a reason it's not like this in any other North American jurisdiction except Texas, and this will hurt the bottom line for families.

I think that the people who are doing their best with the income they have to get by, which is increasingly difficult because of increasing income inequality, shouldn't be punished with fluctuating electricity rates. They shouldn't be punished with situations in which their electricity bill may go up a couple of hundred dollars in a month because people aren't prepared to plan for that. I feel like we should reward people for planning in that way and not punish them with higher electricity rates.

Of course, one of the other challenges with this – I've focused sort of mostly on the financial implications in terms of volatility. Certainly, we had an amendment on the floor, that we were hoping the government would support, which at least prevented individuals from doing that intentionally. Unfortunately, I don't think that survived. One of the other challenges is that we get rolling brownouts and blackouts, which is a huge concern in terms of deregulation. So not only is it the case that people will have unpredictable power bills; they'll also have unpredictable power. I think that, you know, in this day and age electricity is no longer a luxury. I don't think that it has been for quite a long time. Our lives and almost everything about them rely on the presence of electricity. It is important to us to be able to turn on the light and know that it will go on.

5:00

You know, there have been a couple of case studies on Texas, obviously. They experienced brownouts in 2011, 2014, and 2015, as well as rolling blackouts in 2011. This resulted in consumers not necessarily having power every day on a bunch of different days. They had a price of \$438 on June 25, and the next day, on June 26, it maxed out at \$3,000 a megawatt hour. It's pretty big. When I'm

talking about volatility, this is pretty intense volatility that we're dealing with, so I think that that is a huge concern.

I mean, overall, people need the ability to be able to plan their lives. They need to know that their electricity will be there. They need to know what price they're going to pay for it, or at least within a reasonable range what price they're going to pay for it. I think that that's really important. I think that this bill is taking us in the wrong direction, and I would urge all members to vote against it.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I proudly represent the riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview but as well equally appreciate the position that has been bestowed upon me to act as House leader on behalf of the opposition.

I rise to speak to Bill 18. As no surprise to members in this House, there are quite a few concerns that I have in changing the course that our government laid out, moving Alberta from a capacity market back to an energy-only market. For context – and I'm sure that much of what I'm going to say members have already heard – I think it's important to reiterate. Alberta is only one of two jurisdictions in North America that have an energy-only market: Alberta and Texas. Every other state and province in this country has a capacity market, and that's for a number of reasons, Madam Chair. We know that a capacity market actually provides consumers with more stability as far as prices for their electricity.

Part of what we did when our government started the transition of Alberta going off an energy-only market to a capacity market is that we brought in legislation to put a price cap on electricity rates. Really, what we're trying to avoid here are price spikes but also rolling brownouts. Anyone who's lived in this province for more than a handful of years will have experienced the rolling brownouts that have occurred throughout the province. That's something that I know frustrates not only, you know, Alberta individuals and their families, but it also has a significant impact on business and on the economy. One of the ways to ensure that there is sustainable electricity and that it's reliable is through a capacity market.

Now, I know, again, that some of my colleagues, I'm sure, have talked at length about the value of a capacity market, recognizing that this is where it came from. You know, on the record, obviously, Madam Chair, the decision to move to a capacity market from an energy-only market wasn't a decision that was made as a political decision. It wasn't a decision made by the NDP caucus. This was after consulting with many different industry experts from the AESO to others, including industry themselves saying: we definitely need more stability in our electricity system. Ensuring that there's a reasonable cost to customers is something, the AESO said, that the capacity market is better at delivering, that consistency, less volatility. There's less incentive to hedge prices, which, of course, can happen in an energy-only market. Capacity markets are based on market-based structures, so their incentives are for price competitiveness, which, again, is important, that those savings get passed on to Albertans.

I'm going to speak a little more at length here, Madam Chair, but I would like to propose an amendment. I have the appropriate number of copies. Of course, the top copy is the original. That will come to you shortly.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Just give us a moment to get the amendment.

Okay. This will be known as amendment A2. Just for all hon. members' sake, there are two pages to this amendment.

Mr. Bilous: Correct. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll read it into the record to give our pages a chance to ensure that members can get this into their hands to look at. Correct; it is two pages. I'll read the amendment, and then I'll make my comments.

I'm moving this amendment on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall. This amendment states that he moves that Bill 18, the Electricity Statutes (Capacity Market Termination) Amendment Act, 2019, be amended in section 2

(a) in subsection (3) by striking out clause (b) and substituting the following:

(b) by repealing clause (c.1) and substituting the following:
(c.1) to ensure that a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers.

(b) in subsection (5) by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:

(a) by repealing subsection (1) and substituting the following:

Duty to act responsibly

16(1) the Independent Systems Operator must exercise its powers and carry out its duties, responsibilities and functions in a timely manner that is fair and responsible to provide for

(a) the safe, reliable and economic operation of the interconnected electric system,

(b) the promotion of a fair, efficient and openly competitive electricity market, and

(c) the reliable supply of electricity available at reasonable cost to customers.

(c) in subsection (8)(a) by striking out subclause (i) and substituting the following:

(i) by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:

(a) that the ISO rule

(i) is not technically deficient,

(ii) supports the fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the electricity market,

(iii) ensures a reliable supply of electricity is available at a reasonable cost to customers, and

(iv) is in the public interest.

(d) in subsection (17)

(i) in clause (a)(iii), in the proposed section 25(1)(b) by adding the following after subclause (ii):

(ii.1) that the ISO rule does not support ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers;

(ii) in clause (b) in the proposed section 25(1.1) by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) that the ISO rule does not support ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to consumers;

(iii) in clause (d) in the proposed section 25(4.1) by striking out "or" at the end of clause (b) and by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) that the ISO rule does not support ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at a reasonable cost to customers, or

(iv) in clause (e) in the proposed section 25(4.11) by striking out "or" at the end of the clause (b) and by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) that the ISO rule does not support ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at a reasonable cost to customers.

Now, Madam Chair, if you're wondering – and I appreciate that members are looking at this amendment for the first time. It can be challenging to flip through the bill, so I'm happy to speak to this.

Essentially, what we're doing is that Bill 18 in its current form would strike out that our electricity market has the goal of a reliable supply of electricity and that it's available at a reasonable cost. So we want to ensure that that gets put in. It's been a part of legislation that has governed Alberta's electricity system. It was in the past, quite frankly, even under the energy-only market. We incorporated it into our transition to a capacity market, and my hope is that the government meant to include this and didn't.

Again, you know, I've been on the other side. I appreciate that sometimes things get missed. Quite frankly, this is why we are in this place and why it's important to have a healthy, robust debate, and one of the roles of the opposition is to say: hey, folks; you missed this one part which, again, is critical because this helps direct the ISO to ensure that there is a reliable supply of electricity for Albertans and that it's available at a reasonable cost. We know that, obviously, we need electricity in all corners of the province. It's relied on for everything from our schools and hospitals to our businesses, to our communities, and, obviously, our homes and families. That gives the ISO the ability that, should prices spike, they can intervene, which I think is quite critical, Madam Chair. It's consistent with government changes. It is not changing the direction of this bill.

5:10

We know, as other members have spoken, that energy-only markets can lead to price spikes and to rolling blackouts, and we just want to make sure that the market can guarantee a reliable supply of electricity and that it's available at a reasonable cost. Again, this fits with the spirit, I believe, of what this bill is proposing. It's a simple amendment to ensure that we are protecting Albertans, that we are asking the government to consider. At the end of the day, I appreciate that the government believes that an energy-only market is the best form of an electricity system for consumers, for businesses, so what this does, sticking with that spirit – again, we may disagree on that, where I'm a fan of a capacity market, but recognizing that they want to move to an energy-only market, this codifies the reason behind legislating or moving back to an energy-only market, ensuring that there is reliable electricity for Albertans available at a reasonable cost.

For those reasons, I encourage all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, and thank you for the amendment. We just are receiving it now. When we conducted the review of the capacity market, we asked stakeholders for three things: to tell us which system gives us the most affordable electricity market, the most reliable, and the one that would attract investment the most. Our proposal and our bill is weighing and balancing all three of those things.

We have also asked the AESO to report back to us with a series of improvements to the energy-only market, things that will actually make the energy market perform better. I think that's what this amendment is seeking to do, telling us how the energy-only market could perform better. We've asked for a thorough review with thorough recommendations coming from the AESO, so at this point I wouldn't support this amendment. I don't recall the stakeholders asking for these specific changes at this time. At this point we've got a whole comprehensive set of proposals to come back from the AESO on how to improve that market, and I'd like to see that process unfold with some policy changes and some

policy direction and some advice on how to make it perform the best possible.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Might I put for your consideration, through to the minister, because it sounds like she's not opposed to what's being proposed here – she just doesn't know that it would be helpful in the long run – that rather than voting against it, perhaps there would be an opportunity to consider this with more time, certainly moving to adjourn and going to another piece or something else. It didn't sound like the minister thought that this would be counter to what she's hoping to achieve. I just want to put that out for reflection while I give my other comments on this.

My notes have been taken from me, but I will get them back. I want to say how – certainly, the electricity team that came to brief us at cabinet over and over and over again spent a considerable amount of time walking us through the pros and cons of the various markets and the importance of having stable, predictable power, affordable rates, and reliability.

As was mentioned by colleagues, only Edmonton and Texas have the market system that is being proposed through this bill and is being considered again. I have a number of concerns about whether or not that will result in significant increases to costs. It seems almost certain that it will be based on all of the briefings that we had from folks both within the public sector and outside stakeholders. There also are concerns about whether or not we'll see brownout conditions, that we saw previously and that other jurisdictions, including Texas, see in extreme weather, which is certainly a safety risk.

Rushing to blow up what was a very thorough consultation and research around this to move forward with a new model, without knowing whether or not we will have those implications, I think, doesn't benefit Alberta consumers. I think it certainly would behoove us to take the time to do the consideration of the proposed amendment and to ensure that we are indeed – if the minister and her entire cabinet, the caucus, and all members of this House indeed do believe that this is the best model moving forward, I think it would behoove us to have the time to consider whether or not these amendments are indeed counter to the intention of the bill. I think that they certainly could benefit that goal of stability and affordability.

I have to say that the amendment puts this language in to make sure that Albertans know that their electricity market should provide “a reliable supply of electricity [that's] available at reasonable cost.” I know that for many folks that I did talk to about electricity costs, those were the two things that they were hoping to achieve. While sometimes those conversations focused around a price on carbon and its impact on electricity rates, certainly throwing the system into disarray would also result in higher costs. Making sure that we have the addition of a reliable supply of electricity at a reasonable cost, I think, is important.

The amendment also changes the language from “capacity market” to “electricity market” around these sections, so it's consistent with the government's changes, something, again, that I think probably was their intention and that just didn't make it in through the amendments. I'm happy to provide that through our proposed amendment. We know energy-only markets can lead to those price spikes that we mentioned.

Again, I get it. This is a massive piece of legislation with a lot of changes, so taking the time to be able to consider this amendment, particularly around some of the wording not being consistent with

the actual wording and intention of the government's own bill, I think, would be warranted for consideration. We certainly want to make sure that we have a market that guarantees a reliable supply for all Albertans.

We know that we've heard about a lot of things happening through the budget that will drive up costs on ordinary families in a number of areas. We've talked about insurance rates on vehicles. We've talked about land transfers when you're registering a land title, those costs doubling. We've talked about the fact – or maybe we haven't talked about it yet – that there's a line item in the business plan about \$100 million more in school fees, essentially. I think that the language is: “Revenue from sources other than government.” So school fees are going up. We know that there are going to be increased fees for folks who are on drug plans and in other areas.

I think one of the ways that we could certainly give some greater certainty to Albertans at this time would be to take this amendment into consideration, act on it, and make sure that we actually do move forward with the focus of a reliable supply at a reasonable cost. That's the rationale for this, and that's the motivation for bringing forward these amendments. If the government has had time to consider how they might be able to move on this, because certainly they aren't counter to what I believe their intention was, particularly in the language of saying “energy-only market” as opposed to – sorry; my brain is having a hard time catching up to me at this time – the other market model . . .

Mr. Bilous: Capacity.

Ms Hoffman: Capacity. Thank you, my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Certainly, getting the language right in the government's own bill, I think, would be of benefit to improving this legislation and the way it is.

Those are some of the key points that I wanted to raise in regard to this debate. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:20 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Loyola	Renaud
Ganley	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.

Against the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Shandro
Copping	Loewen	Toews
Ellis	Lovely	Toor
Getson	Nally	Turton
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Walker
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Issik	Rutherford	Yao
Jones	Savage	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 27
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We are now back on the main bill in committee. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 18 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 18 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:25 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	LaGrange	Shandro
Copping	Loewen	Toews
Ellis	Lovely	Toor
Getson	Nally	Turton
Glubish	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Walker
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Issik	Rutherford	Yao
Jones	Savage	Yaseen

Against:

Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
--------	---------	----------

Carson

Ganley

Totals:

Loyola

Pancholi

For – 27

Renaud

Sigurdson, L.

Against – 9

[Request to report Bill 18 carried]

Mrs. Savage: I would move to rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. van Dijken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 18. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, does the Assembly concur in the report? Those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to advise that pursuant to Government Motion 31 there shall be no evening sitting tonight, and I therefore move to adjourn the House until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875