



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 27, 2019

Day 48

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

First Session

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United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's my honour today to introduce a familiar face to the Chamber, former Member for Stony Plain Mr. Ken Lemke.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a couple of school groups visiting us this afternoon from the constituency of Edmonton-McClung as well as the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. If our students would like to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

In the Speaker's gallery this afternoon is a very special guest of the Member for Livingstone-Macleod. His daughter Elisabeth Reid is here to see her dad in action.

Hon. members, this afternoon in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Education: members of the research branch, evidence and labour relations sector, and system excellence division.

Also in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. Please welcome members of Fertilizer Canada.

Guest of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: welcome acclaimed documentary filmmaker Ms Giselle Portenier.

Also – I don't see them, but they may be arriving a little bit later – visiting the Member for Central Peace-Notley: Michael Saiuw and Christina Cunningham from Vertex Pharmaceuticals, as well as members of the cystic fibrosis community in the new developments of CF drug treatment.

If you would like to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Female Genital Mutilation

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring attention to a practice that impacts the human rights of women and girls around the world. This year, as part of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence we are also looking at how we can make an impact here at home, in Alberta, and beyond.

One of these areas is the practice of female genital mutilation or cutting. This despicable practice happens on every continent except Antarctica. Over 200 million women and girls around the world have been cut. The practice occurs because of myths and misinformation, but the facts are that this violent act has no benefits whatsoever. It does only harm. A girl who has undergone female genital mutilation or cutting can suffer from lifelong health complications, even death. Regardless of these facts, up to 4 million girls are at risk of being cut every year. That's one girl every 11 seconds. Girls are born perfect in every way, and this practice is a method of sexual control.

Mr. Speaker, female genital mutilation and cutting has been an indictable offence in the Criminal Code of Canada since 1997. Any parent who performs this procedure or gives permission for it to be performed on their child can be charged. I was shocked when I learned that, to date, there has not been a single prosecution. This is because the practice is surrounded by secrecy, and the prevalence of it in our province is unknown.

That is why tonight we are hosting a special screening of *In the Name of Your Daughter* at the Royal Alberta Museum with film director Giselle Portenier, who we have sitting in the gallery. Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the Assembly and the public to attend. Giselle Portenier's film gives a voice to the girls who haven't had voices for thousands of years. This inspiring film, shot in northern Tanzania, is about girls' courage, standing up for their rights, and preventing and addressing female genital mutilation and cutting. This film is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the complexity of these issues. It is about Rhobi Samwelly, who risked her own life fighting this harmful practice of cutting the clitoris and protecting girls in her safe house. Following the film, we will be holding a panel discussion to talk about female genital mutilation and cutting and gender-based violence.

This practice is not based in one faith, culture, or religious text. It's not about politics, and it's not about party lines. The time is now, where we must all stand up together and end female genital mutilation and cutting. We must end violence against women and girls. This is our responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to respond on behalf of the Official Opposition.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost 30 years ago activists at the inaugural women's global leadership institute started the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, that runs from November 25 to December 10 every year, ending on Human Rights Day. Every year organizations around the world unite to call on governments and individuals to put an end to gender-based violence around the world.

It is important to note that when we talk about gender-based violence, we acknowledge that there are multiple genders. We know that trans, nonbinary individuals, and two-spirit people are at a higher risk of being targeted both here and globally. No matter where you live, women and gender-diverse people are not immune. They're disproportionately at risk.

Despite almost three decades of activism the statistics remain alarming. Up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. One hundred and thirty-seven women across the world are killed by a member of their own family every day. Rape continues to be used as a weapon of oppression. At least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation.

Indigenous women are physically and sexually assaulted almost three times more often than nonindigenous women here in Canada. Indigenous women also experience domestic violence at higher rates and are roughly seven times more likely to be killed by a serial killer.

Approximately 50 million adolescent girls world-wide have experienced forced sex at some point in their life.

Transgender women of colour are living in crisis, especially black transgender women. This year alone in the United States at least 22 transgender and gender-nonconforming people have been killed, and all but one were black.

School-related gender-based violence is a major obstacle to universal schooling and the right to education for girls. Women still report instances of sexual harassment in the workplace that far

eclipse their male counterparts. Eighty-two per cent of women parliamentarians reported having experienced some form of psychological violence while serving their terms.

This is not an exhaustive list of the stats. We know that there's much, much more, including the victims we'll never hear about.

Mr. Speaker, we – community members, society, all members of this House – must continue to support all efforts to end gender-based violence. This means talking about it, and it also means action. It means making laws that support those efforts. It means ensuring that organizations have adequate funding to address these issues. And it also means supporting survivors both in our communities and abroad. We've got a long, long way to go, but I know that with concerted efforts from all of us, we can get there.

Thank you.

Members' Statements

Culture Ministry Alcohol Purchase

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a fiscal Conservative, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is leading by example when it comes to MLA wages and benefits. That's why I was so surprised to hear from the NDP that the minister of culture and tourism was purchasing enormous quantities of liquor. Was it for her own personal consumption? Worst of all, the NDP claimed that the liquor was being purchased from a UCP supporter. Cronyism, booze, fiscal mismanagement: the story was too good to be true.

Well, as is all too frequently the case when it comes to NDP allegations, the story was too good to be true. The liquor was actually purchased so that it could be sold to thirsty patrons of the Royal Alberta Museum. Strangely enough, the Royal Alberta Museum had been purchasing from the very same business when it was under NDP management. This just proves that when it comes to the NDP, there is one thing you can count on: misinformation, fear, and smears. This story is about as real as their promises to balance the budget.

The thing is that this isn't even the first time the NDP has been caught red-handed. Only a few months ago the NDP was forced to issue a public apology for spreading misinformation about a UCP nomination candidate. But they didn't learn then, and they keep inventing new ways to misinform Albertans, like their ongoing attempt with the price tag of the job-creation tax cut.

1:40

You see, Mr. Speaker, while our government and my colleagues here on this side of the aisle will continue to deal in facts and numbers, the NDP can continue to deal in fear and numerology. I'm proud to stand with this Premier and this government to continue delivering on our plan to create jobs, grow the economy, and build pipelines. That's what Albertans want, and that's what Albertans elected us to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigations

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, for the benefit of my friends on the government benches I'd just like to remind them of some of the many scandals the Election Commissioner they voted to fire was investigating. Since December of last year the commissioner was investigating irregular contributions to the Jeff Callaway campaign and, clearly, for good reason. It has been learned that Callaway's campaign was funded by a single \$60,000

corporate donation, which was divided up between people who claimed to be donating their own money to Callaway.

Callaway's campaign, as you might recall, was created to help the Premier attack Brian Jean. The Premier's director of issues management would write speeches, debate talking points, create graphics and videos, and give strategic direction to Callaway's campaign. They even chose the date and wrote the speech where Callaway dropped out and endorsed the Premier. To sum it up, Mr. Speaker, fake donors for a fake campaign cooked up to attack an honest man in Brian Jean.

Now, the Premier, House leader, and Justice minister can stomp their feet and declare this fear and smear as much as they'd like, but let's look at the objective facts. The Election Commissioner, that this Premier fired, has issued 58 fines, totalling over \$211,000, and fined 16 individuals and companies. The Election Commissioner and his team had been working hard to uncover the details of this deep scandal, and he was still working up until this Premier decided that he had had enough about accountability and that a transparent government wasn't worth a million dollars over five years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are watching and waiting for answers on this scandal. Let's hope that this government and Premier are finally ready to give it to them. Frankly, though, I'm not holding my breath.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka is rising on a statement.

AgSafe Alberta Society

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently received a copy of a letter written by a constituent, Tom Kootstra. He's a dairy farmer located near Ponoka. He's also the chair of Alberta Milk. He writes for Alberta Milk:

We are writing you to express our strong support of the excellent work delivered by the AgSafe Alberta Society (ASAS). Alberta Milk represents and is solely funded by the 507 dairy farm families in the province. We are governed by an elected Board of Directors of dairy farmers.

As one of the ten founding members of ASAS, Alberta Milk and its farmer members are fully supportive of the mandate and programming deliverables of ASAS. The strong farmer awareness and educational approach of the ASAS has helped to raise the importance and profile of farm safety across our province. Farm families deserve support as they work to keep their farms and ranches safe and healthy for their family members and their staff. Dairy farmers, like all Alberta farmers wish for all . . . to arrive home safely each evening.

AgSafe is an industry-led organization that delivers farm safety management tools, resources, and programs for Alberta farmers and ranchers. The NDP government's passing of the disastrous Bill 6 didn't improve farm safety. As Tom says: while you can't legislate ag safety, AgSafe seeks to create a culture of safety. AgSafe is a coalition of 29 agricultural producer groups representing 97 per cent of the ag industry across this province. With one voice they advocate on behalf of farmers and ranchers. AgSafe has done tremendous work in terms of advocating for farm safety across the province. They are an organization made by farmers for farmers.

I take my hat off to the Alberta farmers and their efforts to be organized for safe farm families. I want to acknowledge the excellent work provided by the society on behalf of Alberta farm families. Great work, Alberta Milk and all of the ag member groups of this coalition.

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to moving to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I would like to take a brief moment and

opportunity to remind you all that the alert-ready emergency system is scheduled to be tested in Alberta during the proceedings this afternoon. Please ensure that your electronic devices are turned off for approximately the next 30 minutes as I would hate for anyone to have to pay a fine for an electronic device going off.

Climate Change Policy and Job Creation

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, last week Albertans received concerning news on two fronts. The first front was jobs and the economy. The city of Calgary alone saw 1,000 jobs lost in just one week in both the private and public sector, lost because a \$4.7 billion handout to corporations doesn't create jobs and because public-sector workers like teachers and postsecondary workers are paying for that handout with their own jobs. With three more years of government cutbacks in the future and with unstoppable structural change leading to permanent reductions in Alberta's workforce, the prospect of creating jobs has never looked more bleak.

The second front was on climate change. The United Nations reported that the world is on track to warm by more than three degrees Celsius if we don't drastically reduce carbon emissions. Albertans will pay the price with increased droughts, floods, fires, and disease.

But there's good news. We can tackle both of these problems at once with smart government policy, policies like investing in more renewable energy, like wind, solar, and geothermal power; policies like investing in energy efficiency in our homes and in our industries; policies like investing in more public transit, improving the existing systems in our cities and expanding public transit to more people living in rural Alberta. All of these investments would more than make up for the losses we've seen in the traditional energy economy and give thousands upon thousands of Albertans the ability to live and raise their families in prosperity and retire in dignity.

Albertans have been hurting for a long time, and we're all looking forward to the next economic boom, but we don't have to wait for the next boom. We can create one, a green boom. The best part of a green boom: this one won't go bust.

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

Federal Energy Policies

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The results of the 2019 federal election were a crushing blow to many Albertans. Over the past four years our energy industry was crippled by the devastating policies enacted by the Trudeau government. Legislation such as the antipipeline Bill C-69 and antitanker Bill C-48 were direct attacks on our province. Bill C-69 pretty much guarantees that building future pipelines will be an immense struggle, even more so than the constantly changing wall of legal barriers that is required right now.

At the very least, the federal Liberal government put on a facade and pretended they were semi pro pipeline. That much cannot be said for the federal NDP. They are completely and avidly antipipeline, antienergy, and anti-Alberta. If Trudeau works with the federal NDP, it could spell the death of one of the nation's most important industries.

Our province's energy industry is the source of immense wealth, wealth that benefits not just our province but all Canadians. Our contributions to federal programs such as CPP and equalization far outweigh the benefits we receive. If the other provinces want to reap the benefits of our resources, they should also be willing to help ensure the success and prosperity of the industry.

Not only is it hypocritical of other provinces to demand the benefits of our energy sector while at the same time trying to stop it at every turn; it is divisive and unhealthy for our country. We must work together as Albertans and as Canadians to ensure national unity. Provinces must build each other up, not tear each other down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Oil Transportation and Production Curtailment

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the first things this Premier and the UCP government did was rip up the oil-by-rail contracts. This meant we no longer have the capacity to ship 120,000 barrels per day. This further hurt our ability to get our resources to market, and it meant that the Premier had to extend curtailment.

This government doesn't have a plan for market access, and it's hurting jobs and investment. Drilling rights auctions are on track for a record low, and we have had one of the lowest number of active drilling rigs on record. For the next year, oil drilling is expected to be flat at best. Each working drilling rig supports 145 direct and indirect jobs. There are currently over 30 per cent fewer active rigs than last year. Assuming that the lifting of curtailment would return us to 2018 levels of drilling, that's 6,815 jobs we are missing out on due to the extension of curtailment. The curtailment extension is hurting investment in the province. The CEO of Imperial Oil says that the \$2.6 billion Aspen oil sands project in northern Alberta, announced a year ago, will remain on the sidelines until the province completely ends its oil curtailment program.

1:50

The Premier claimed his \$4.7 billion corporate handout would create jobs and investment in Alberta, but this hasn't happened here. Husky received \$233 million and then turned around and laid off hundreds of employees. EnCana has moved its head office to the U.S. They are investing elsewhere. Since the corporate handout was implemented, there are fewer jobs in the natural resource sector, layoffs, and companies moving, precisely the kinds of things this handout was supposed to prevent. It proves they haven't created the market conditions to attract investment. It proves they got the economy completely wrong.

Oral Question Period

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

Farm Worker Wages

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in democratic societies, when people work, their employers are required to pay them. It's kind of a post Industrial Revolution sort of thing, but now under this Premier's bill there's no guarantee that many farm workers in Alberta will get paid at all. This isn't reversing Bill 6, which I understand was in their platform; this is reversing hundreds of years of basic labour and human rights. To the Premier: why do you believe farm workers in Alberta should have to work for as little as \$2 or \$3 an hour or maybe nothing at all?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, we just heard right there the contempt that the NDP has for Alberta's farmers, the leader of the NDP suggesting that farmers are not going to pay the folks who work for them. You know what? It's our farmers who helped to build our society. It's our farmers who feed our society. It's our

farmers who make enormous sacrifices, farmers right now who have gone through a terrible year, and the last thing they need is the Official Opposition casting aspersions on them as a bunch of folks who are trying to exploit labour. This government stands by and will defend our farmers.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, this isn't about defending or not defending farmers. This is about making sure basic rights to be paid for your work are still in existence in Alberta. The vast majority of farmers, of course, as with any employer, pay their employees regardless of the law. But there still needs to be a law, because the bill opens the door to abuse by those who would hurt and exploit others. Some of these workers come here on temporary contracts from foreign countries. They need the fundamental protection of a right to be paid. Why do you think they don't need that fundamental right?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the line of questioning is ridiculous and contemptuous of our farmers, who are people who make enormous sacrifices. Every now and then our farmers need a bit of help, and of course they treat their workers well. The NDP distrusted our farmers so much – the NDP, so owned by their union special interests – that they created a law to unionize farm workers. Guess what? There wasn't a single workplace that got unionized, not one. What does that tell us? That our farm workers are happy with their relationship with their farm employers.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't appear to understand what they are doing. Nowhere in North America can you be employed, have legal working hours, and not be paid at least some type of minimum wage. This Premier now has the honour of introducing the most exploitive labour regime on the continent. This is the Alberta disadvantage. This is not about supporting farmers or not. I support farmers, too. And farm workers work hard. Again to the Premier: why do you remove the right for those workers to be paid by right?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the only thing being removed here is the NDP's credibility as they make stuff up that is manifestly untrue, just like yesterday. They made up a \$35,000 liquor purchase by the minister of culture when, in fact, it was purchased by a restaurant starting under the previous NDP government; just like they asserted yesterday that this budget eliminated the low-income transit pass when, in fact, it was renewed by the last budget; just like they make up this so-called \$4.7 billion tax break when, in fact, this year it's \$100 million. Would the NDP please just stop making stuff up?

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

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I will keep doing is reading the documents that that government tables in this House. If they don't like them – I'm sorry – they're their documents.

Calgary Police Service Funding

Ms Notley: Now, the fight against a rise in deadly gun violence has become a daily activity for Calgary police. The Premier cut \$13 million from those police just to pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate handout on page 144. Now the chief is saying that if the city doesn't find new money to backfill it, 85 positions will be lost. Premier, this is your cut. What should Calgarians do, pay more tax or buy a gun and lock their doors?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the crime wave in this province began under the NDP, and it began under their friends in Ottawa, who began stripping away tough-on-crime laws. This government is acting to protect citizens from criminals and from both violent and nonviolent property crime. The Minister of Justice has already begun implementing our platform commitment to hire 50 additional prosecutors, to put more police on the roads. He'll be having an important announcement about that in the days to come. Unlike the NDP, this government stands to defend law-abiding Albertans.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the folks over there really need to stop misleading Albertans. They promised 500 more officers. Instead, we're getting eight new articling students, asking bylaw officers to do more dangerous work, telling rural municipalities to pay more for the few police they already have, creating delays in the court system, and slashing 85 positions from CPS alone. Why won't the Premier admit that the safety and security of Albertans will always come second to his \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the job-creation tax cut actually represents \$100 million in forgone revenue this year. As projected by multiple highly regarded, independent economists, it will lead to the creation of up to 58,000 new full-time private-sector jobs. If we want to grow the resources available to fund public services, we need to restore investor confidence and get this economy moving. That's what the job-creation tax cut is about. They raised taxes on businesses and saw revenues from businesses decline. That was the job crisis they created. We're turning it around.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, they're turning it around for Newfoundland and Wisconsin.

Anyway, 78 shootings, five fatalities, 33 injuries: while this is going on, the Calgary police chief told council that if they decide to freeze taxes, it means a full \$8.4 million hole in their budget. Last spring this Premier claimed that he was the law-and-order guy – indeed, today he did – but he's responsible for cutting 85 positions in his city during a rise in gun violence. To the Premier: your cuts have consequences on the lives of real people, including your neighbours; why are you breaking yet another promise to them?

Mr. Kenney: We'll do no such thing, Mr. Speaker. We're not reducing police funding. The municipalities are responsible for their budgets. They're accountable to their taxpayers. Dr. MacKinnon's panel confirmed that provincial grants to municipalities in Alberta are higher than in any other part of the country. That's why we are asking our municipal partners to be part of fiscal responsibility as we reduce overall government spending by 2.8 per cent, less than 3 pennies on the dollar. The NDP's alternative? I guess it's nothing but a sales tax.

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

Education Funding

Ms Hoffman: Hundreds of students in Calgary walked out of their classes this week to protest the layoffs of 300 of their teachers. I'm deeply moved by this display of love and support that young people are showing towards their teachers, and it's a stark contrast to the blame game that this Premier is playing. We know that the Premier blames the local board, but blame won't teach these kids grade 11, Premier. Why won't the Premier take action to reverse the more than \$30 million in cuts that he's passed on to the Calgary public board?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

2:00

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. CBE's fiscal record is one that all Albertans should be concerned about. They do receive a \$1.2 billion operating budget to oversee 130,000 students. That is roughly a third of what the whole city of Calgary operates on in their operating budget. This board has previously made \$9.1 million in accounting errors, signed a 20-year lease for which they are paying \$6 million more in rent than the total valuation of the building, and often projects deficits and ends the year with significant surpluses.

Ms Hoffman: So she blames Calgary public, but last night Red Deer Catholic, where the minister was a trustee for 11 years, announced that they would have to cut an additional \$2.75 million from this year's budget. That's on top of the \$2.3 million that they already cut after their first look at the provincial budget, earlier this year. That's more than \$5 million cut from a budget that this minister helped to write for more than a decade. This Premier keeps saying that he maintained funding for education. That's clearly not true. What does the Premier have to say to the people who voted for him on a promise that he has broken?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I respect the fact that Red Deer Catholic is looking at their budgets and becoming fiscally responsible. But going back to the CBE, the Calgary board of education, who chose to – the first line of defence was to go to 300 contracts, to end the contracts with 300 temporary teachers, disrupting the lives of those teachers and those students. That is unacceptable.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, the minister just said that they weren't fiscally responsible when she was the board chair. You've got to be kidding me.

Also, last night the Edmonton public board began planning for their 2020 budget, and they are anticipating 8 to 10 per cent cuts based on the data from the minister. The board is going to use up their reserves and will be facing hundreds of layoffs. So the Premier can't say that he's surprised; boards have given him notice. What's happening in Calgary will happen in Edmonton. Is the Premier going to stick to his \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout at the cost of these teachers, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I, again, sympathize with the teachers, the students, the families, but this was a decision made by the Calgary board of education which was very rash. It ended the contracts of 300 temporary teachers. I have ordered an independent financial audit and a governance review because at the end of the day they have a \$1.2 billion budget, and they are not meeting the needs of their students. Albertans overwhelmingly elected our government to live within our means and get our finances in order. As a public body the CBE has a responsibility to assist in this endeavour while still supporting their students . . .

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

Election Commissioner's Office

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, last week this government raced to fire the Election Commissioner and stop his investigation in its tracks.

Presumably, the office of Lorne Gibson is full of sensitive files about alleged voter fraud and all of the nefarious actions taken to ensure this Premier won the UCP leadership race. Bill 22 was given royal assent on Friday. Can the Premier inform the House if the Election Commissioner's office is still open and functioning, and if not, can you please inform the House what happened to the sensitive material in the office?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer, who is an independent officer of this Legislature, has already answered all of the hon. member's questions. I suggest that she refer to his press release, and if she has further questions, she can contact the Chief Electoral Officer. But this is another example of what the main point is: no one can trust what the NDP said. It's just like yesterday, when they accused the minister of culture of buying \$35,000 worth of liquor for her office. That was ridiculous. It turned out that it was for a museum, and using the same supplier that was in place under the NDP government. Here's the reality: the NDP make things up. Albertans don't believe them.

Ms Sweet: Well, Mr. Speaker, last week I wrote to the CEO of Elections Alberta to ensure that the records in the commissioner's office are preserved properly. This is critical to ensuring that any investigation being conducted into the UCP leadership race is seen through and that justice is served. I asked for a report back to the Legislature on the process for storing and transferring those records, and I have yet to hear back. To the Premier: do you support my call for a report from Elections Alberta? Will you do everything in your power to ensure that it's provided to this House?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this side of the House supports the independent officer of the Legislature. The CEO of Elections Alberta has served this Chamber for a while and, in my experience, has done a good job and was reappointed actually by the NDP when they were in government. Again, back to my earlier point. Nobody can trust what the NDP is saying because they just make things up, just like yesterday standing in the House and, again, accusing the minister of culture of buying over \$30,000 worth of liquor, when it turned out that it was associated with a restaurant and a regular purchase, and then defamed, in my opinion, a good, hard-working business in the province of Alberta who provides liquor to that establishment.

Ms Sweet: Our leader also stated that she will be filing further complaints about the vote on Bill 22 to the Ethics Commissioner. Those complaints are forthcoming. Let's remember that the commissioner did warn members of this House under investigation or linked to investigations to be very cautious. The Justice minister's response to her warning was to take to Twitter, with a Trump-like response: no conflict. People clearly loved that response. To the Premier: since the commissioner's warning have you been diligent and reached out to the Ethics Commissioner to determine if you are, in fact, in conflict?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we know that the Ethics Commissioner has actually called out that hon. member on several occasions for abusing the process when it comes to contacting the Ethics Commissioner.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we are confident that we were within the Conflicts of Interest Act and that members who participated in the debate were within the Conflicts of Interest Act. Yes, as I said, our staff have talked to the Ethics Commissioner, and we think that we are within the Conflicts of Interest Act. We take that very, very seriously. We also take her time very, very seriously, and I suggest

that that hon. member heed her advice and stop wasting that independent officer's time.

Educational Curriculum Content

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, I was sadly not shocked when I received a letter from a concerned Calgary parent about politics in her son's grade 10 social studies class. He brought home a test reflecting a deeply concerning anti oil and gas rhetoric with correct answers being: oil sands development means the destruction of tracts of forests, and oil sands development should have more restrictions on it. To the Minister of Education: why are anti-Alberta and anti oil and gas attacks passing as curriculum in our school system? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. I think the Minister of Education has the opportunity to answer the question before anyone else.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, this is deeply troubling. Alberta has a great story to tell when it comes to our responsible energy industry and the tens of thousands of workers who make a living from oil and gas. Alberta's energy industry and the prosperity it creates builds schools not just in Alberta but right across Canada. To hear about this type of rhetoric emerging in our classrooms is troubling. Our educators have a duty to tell the truth about our responsible energy industry. We said that we were going to take politics out of the classroom, and that's exactly what we will be doing.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this test also contained attacks on capitalism, free trade, and globalization and given that another one of the correct answers on this test was: free trade is behind many of the ills of the modern world; it should be stopped, and given that this continues to highlight that radical left-wing ideology has made its way into our classrooms, what is the government going to do to ensure that we take politics out of the classroom and instead invest in a generation of critical learners? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. It's very difficult to hear.

Mr. Schmidt: You just can't criticize . . .

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar will come to order. It's very difficult to hear the question. I expect I might have a challenge hearing the answer, but I might be surprised. That would be lovely.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This type of ideology has no place in our schools. Teachers do have a wide array of approved course materials in line with the curriculum that are factual, based on evidence, and clear of bias. While some teachers choose to use those materials, others do have the latitude to find resources that are outside of the approved materials. It's frustrating to see that someone would choose to bring their own political ideology into the classroom. We will look into this as we develop a new curriculum. We will get politics out of our education system.

The Speaker: Now the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More shocking news that might shock the other side over there. Given that this parent also

highlighted the recent federal student vote and given that part of the instructions for that vote was an explanation that if you vote Conservative, that means you support racism and don't care about the environment, but if you vote Liberal, NDP, or Green, that means you are not a racist and that you care about the environment, to the Minister: how and why is this type of blatant and biased political partisanship making its way into our classrooms in this great province? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised to hear this. When you see radical activists like David Suzuki, who attacks our energy industry and compares our province to Mordor, actually get invited by the ATA to speak with their members, it's hardly surprising that educators would feel emboldened to bring those biases into the classroom. Parents are losing faith in our education system when they hear about stories like this, and we must act. While the NDP want our children to protest alongside them and their friends in the Extinction Rebellion, Alberta parents really want our curriculum and our schools to prepare our kids for real life. [interjections]

2:10

The Speaker: Order.

Photoradar Review

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, our government took many steps to eliminate improper use of photoradar, including banning it on multilane highways and in transition zones where posted speed limits change rapidly. We were also requiring, by March, all municipalities to demonstrate that they were only using photoradar for safety and not to bring in revenue. We were putting down the cash cow. To the minister: will municipalities still have to comply with the rules we put in place by March, or will you let the cash cow live on?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that the hon. member is complaining about what their government didn't get done during their time in office. As we announced yesterday, we are going to work with the 27 municipalities that use photoradar, the 27 police services, to get good data collected. The report done during the NDP time said that the data wasn't available. We are going to ensure thereafter that photoradar is used for safety and not just as a cash register, as a cash cow, punishing people unreasonably.

Member Loyola: Well, given that many Albertans are worried that the announcement about another two-year study on photoradar is just this government pumping the brakes on taking real action and given that we had actually given Albertans a clear deadline for improper use of photoradar to end and given that we also know that this government has cut heavily into funding for municipalities to pay for its \$4.7 billion giveaway to big corporations, to the minister: are you simply attempting to soften the blow of those cuts by boosting total fines for Alberta motorists?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants those fines to be upped, which indicates to me that he wants photoradar to be used as a cash cow. In his first question he said no. In his second question he said yes. I would challenge the hon. member with his third question to decide what side he's on.

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

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I know which side I'm on – I'm with Albertans – and given that this government is hiking costs to cover its \$4.7 billion no-jobs giveaway and given that this government is also now taking a larger share of speeding fine revenue than they were previously, to the minister: is this the real reason you're allowing photoradar to live on, because you need to help to pay for your failed corporate handout experiment?

Mr. McIver: Well, I guess 2 out of 3 says that he's in favour of a cash cow photoradar, because that's what he's pushing for, Mr. Speaker, more money to municipalities through photoradar. We are advocating for more safety for municipalities through photoradar. I guess the hon. member has decided what camp he's in; he's with the cash cow.

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

Job Creation

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This UCP government campaigned on creating jobs and investment in the province. They made all sorts of claims that all we had to do was give \$4.7 billion to corporations, and jobs and investments would come flooding back to the province. However, we've actually seen the opposite. Their corporate handout hasn't created a single job to date. If anything, we've seen investment leave the province under this UCP government, including Husky and Imperial. To the minister: where are all the jobs and investments that you promised us?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting that the members opposite expect our government to fix, in seven months, four years of gross incompetence. This was a former government that raised taxes on job creators and actually brought in less revenue. Even an elementary school student can understand that that doesn't work. October job numbers showed an increase in 20,000 private-sector jobs in this province, and we're confident that that will continue.

Mr. Bilous: Well, 2.8 per cent growth in 2018: you can't spin that. Given that crude-by-rail contracts would have moved 120,000 barrels of oil per day and given this government ripped up these contracts, leading to an extension of curtailment, and given there are 11,300 fewer jobs in the natural resources sector since the \$4.7 billion corporate handout was introduced and given that lifting curtailment would easily lead to an additional 6,800 jobs and given that companies are actually moving out of the province, will the minister finally admit they have not kept their promise to create jobs and investment in the energy sector?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy has risen.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. After spending 13 years in the private sector working for the oil and gas and pipelines, in my role in this job what I know and what I know clearly is that the main problem is the lack of pipeline capacity, and it's the lack of investor confidence and the lack of ability for investors to believe that Canada can get infrastructure projects built. Over the last four years, while that government was in power, every single pipeline project failed, was either cancelled, vetoed, or delayed, and their leader sat in Justin Trudeau's office the day he killed Northern Gateway pipeline.

Mr. Bilous: Millions of barrels of oil would have already moved.

Given that our government introduced a number of programs to diversify our economy and create jobs and given that these programs were successful in attracting investment and given that this government has now pulled the rug out from under many businesses by cancelling these programs in order to pay for their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout and given that these cancellations will lead to a loss of \$19.1 billion in investment and almost 18,000 jobs forgone, will the government finally admit they failed to create jobs and investment and, worst of all, they failed Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is creating the best broad-based macroeconomic conditions for businesses to thrive through our job-creation tax cut. Unlike the members opposite, we don't have an "or" mentality to the economy; we have an "and" mentality. We can support agriculture and energy and support innovation, diversification, and other sectors. With respect to the tax credit programs the member opposite is speaking of, just a few weeks ago one of the companies that was a benefit of that tax credit system is posting: we are hiring programmers, senior designers, accountants, concept artists. They're doing just fine and are completely sustainable.

Public Service Wages

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees is pushing the government for a 7.85 per cent wage increase. AUPE bosses are completely out of touch with the financial realities of our province. Albertans are facing unemployment, and the management at AUPE has the audacity to ask taxpayers for an outrageous increase in pay. It's not the teachers and it's not the nurses that are out of touch; it's the union bosses. To the minister: what message do you have for AUPE going into negotiations?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Listen, we're all in this together as Albertans. We all have to do our part to live within our means, and we cannot ask Alberta taxpayers for public-sector pay raises at a time when over the last few years we've seen so many Albertans lose their jobs and certainly, in some cases, take a cut in pay. Our MLAs have rolled back our pay by 5 per cent, our Premier by 10 per cent. I would ask union bosses to work with us at this time of restraint. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Pitt: Given that Albertans are paying higher on average for government services and given that AUPE management is demanding an increase in pay, knowing that it very well could lead to a reduction in employees, yet omitting this information from its members and given that members of the AUPE are starting to realize this union is out of touch and they're starting to hold them accountable for the millions they pay in dues, Minister, how will you ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent in the best way possible while maintaining high-quality government services?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public-sector wages make up over 50 per cent of our budget, and our public-sector

remuneration rates are higher than those of other provinces. We can no longer afford to be an outlier in this Confederation. Our government will be a responsible steward of this province's finances. We will make decisions that are in the best interests of Albertans. We will manage this province's finances responsibly.

Mrs. Pitt: Given that thousands of Albertans have lost their jobs over the past four years and further given that the demands of the unions in our province seem to be dominating the headlines and much of the government's time, not to mention the lies they are spewing to their members – I am happy to see that so many people are holding them accountable – Minister, how will your ministry balance the misguided demands of unions with the actual needs of everyday Albertans who just want to get back to work?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me start by saying that we appreciate and recognize the contribution that the public sector makes in delivering high-quality services to Albertans every day. Our government is committed to ensuring that the public sector is sustainable, not only today but for the next generation, and our government will not allow union demands to outweigh the voices of so many Albertans that are still struggling with economic uncertainty. Let me be clear. There are no provisions for public-sector wage increases in this budget.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, this government's treatment of farmers and ranchers during this difficult harvest has alternated between lip service and neglect, but now we see that this government's lack of respect for farm workers has reached a new low. This government and the minister of agriculture are openly attacking the rights of farm and ranch workers. Can the minister of agriculture please explain why, at a time when farms and ranches need support and resources, he is stripping the rights of workers to organize on small farms or to be paid at all, contrary to our Canadian Constitution and the universal declaration of human rights?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are actually very close to repealing Bill 6, so I would say that we are actually on the side of farmers on this side of the Chamber. After extensive consultations it was found that there was no need for unions on farms. That was after 25 consultation stops across the province talking to farmers and farm workers from all different types of commodity backgrounds. It's interesting that over four years under the NDP government there was not one single certification of a union on an Alberta farm. We're proud that on this side of the House we actually listen to farmers.

Mr. Dach: Given that this minister has bragged about his 8,000-kilometre tour of rural Alberta but given that this minister's flagship piece of legislation allows farm and ranch workers to be denied WCB coverage if their employers decide not to subscribe to it and given that it's patently obvious that this minister of agriculture never spoke with paid farm and ranch workers during his heralded consultation tour, is the minister now trying to actually claim that farm and ranch workers told him they did not want WCB coverage?

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is categorically not true. No one cares more about farm workers than farmers, and under Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act,

occupational health and safety will still be the case in Alberta, but farmers would be allowed to develop their own best practices rather than having to go under the OH and S code. The NDP thought that they were in the best scenario to actually dictate what would actually happen on a specific farm. We're giving farms and farm workers the freedom to develop the best practices on the farms, which they do so well already.

Mr. Dach: Thank you. We're going backwards, back to the prelegislative days, when workers had no rights whatsoever.

Now, given that farmers who opt out of WCB coverage could be exposed to lawsuits over injuries or fatalities that have occurred to paid farm workers on their farm and given that these types of lawsuits can have a major negative impact on farms and ranches and in many cases may spell economic disaster and bankruptcy for the farm, did the minister of agriculture consider the high risk this legislation places upon Alberta farmers and ranchers who opt out of WCB coverage, and will he admit that he has left these farmers blowing in the wind?

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can see that the NDP is having quite the issue of opting in and out, whether it be union dues for political activities or opting in and out of insurance. Ultimately, we want to have choice in worker insurance because that's something that we heard directly from farmers. They could have a WCB choice in worker insurance, they could have private insurance, but under the previous NDP Bill 6 lots of farms were forced to have two insurances that they had to pay those premiums for. Ultimately, there was better private-sector worker insurance that even the workers preferred. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Anti-Racism Advisory Council

Ms Goehring: The Anti-Racism Advisory Council was established by our government earlier this year and designated to advise the government on the development of antiracism and antidiscrimination programs, but since taking office this UCP government appears to have ignored this council. The co-chairs of the advisory council said last week that they were introduced briefly to the minister in a phone conversation on May 24 but haven't heard from her since. Will the minister of multiculturalism tell us why she failed to engage with or even talk to the antiracism council, and what signal does this send about this government's priorities?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm looking very forward to continuing conversations. In fact, I think we have one set up here next week. This is the first time in 25 years that we've had a ministry of multiculturalism. It's very important to the government, also very important to the Premier. This is about going beyond the expectations of how it is that we take care of people in this province through culture and faith, making sure that there's security in places like churches and mosques and synagogues to make sure that people can pray in safety.

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the silent treatment from the minister has council members feeling that their important work they do will be dissolved by this government, will

the minister end her government's shameful treatment of the antiracism council and commit to calling them, every single member, by the end of business today, and will she commit to them that their work will continue?

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, I would think that after yesterday's fiasco the member might want to consider the words that she's using and the methodology by which she asks a question. I've already stated that I've spoken to the advisory panel and that we will continue to speak with the advisory panel and will continue on the path. The multiculturalism piece absorbed the antiracism council from Education into Multiculturalism. This is a process that is very important to this side. We're not going to rush it just because they ask us to.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Goehring: Thank you. It's been six months, Mr. Speaker.

Given that this government's refusal to communicate with or provide resources to the antiracism council means that they can't even hold a meeting and given that while they leave the antiracism council in limbo with zero support, this government and minister are happily handing out a \$4.7 billion corporate handout that is being spent in places like Wisconsin, is the reason that the minister of culture is ignoring this council because she plans to fire them and end their vitally important work?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, again let me reiterate the importance of making sure that multiculturalism, antiracism, and all of the pieces that are tied together with that are very important to this. Just to be clear, on that side they spent \$20,000 on one meeting. The resources that they're asking to be spent for one meeting over one weekend – one meeting, one weekend, \$20,000 – they haven't answered about to the taxpayers of Alberta. Just to be clear, that member, based on yesterday's misinformation, should very much take a clear look at the questions that she's asking to this side.

Opposition and Government Positions on Agriculture

Mrs. Allard: Alberta has a long and proud agricultural history. People came to our province from all over the world and for generations homesteaded here. Farmers, including many from the Grande Prairie area, helped to build this province. We should be proud of our farm families. Unfortunately, the members opposite on more than one occasion have displayed disdain and disrespect to Alberta farmers. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar once attacked our very own agriculture minister for being a "son of a rich farmer." To the minister of agriculture: could you tell us why it is important for every member of this House to respect our hard-working farmers and defend Alberta agriculture instead of attacking it?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of agriculture.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Farmers are job creators. They contribute to our economy and the social fabric of Alberta. But as you know, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was kicked out of this Chamber and couldn't even vote on his own piece of legislation last year. Also, it wasn't for disrespecting me; it was for disrespecting the traditions and rules of this very institution. Just recently we had another example of such disrespect as the Leader of the Official Opposition disrespected this House with a self-imposed strike. Farmers are tired of being disrespected, and that is why they voted for . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP fought endlessly with Alberta farmers over their disastrous Bill 6 and given that again the NDP Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar just yesterday seemed to question the practices . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mrs. Allard: . . . of Alberta farmers on fair pay for workers and farm safety standards, to the minister: can you tell us how our government will be taking a different approach in repealing and replacing Bill 6 and actually supporting our farmers instead of criticizing them?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:30 by the Official Opposition House Leader.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the call.

2:30

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question. The true colours of the NDP came out yesterday. Again I'll quote the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, while we were debating Bill 26, when he said: "We cannot rely on every single farmer being a good employer. We cannot rely on every farmer who employs somebody to work on their farm to pay them a fair wage and ensure that they have safe working conditions." That perfectly explains the NDP's mindset towards farmers. No one cares more for farm workers than farmers. That is why we consulted broadly across Alberta, to get farmers' input on how we can repeal Bill 6.

Mrs. Allard: Mr. Speaker, given that just yesterday we had some hard-working Alberta sugar beet farmers here with us in the Legislature and given that once again the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar got up and bizarrely tried to conflate the responsible and ethical practices of Alberta farmers with the policies of Japanese internment . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mrs. Allard: . . . by the federal Liberal government during the Second World War, can the minister tell this House about the great work that our farmers do and why it was offensive and wrong for the member to make this comparison?

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:31 by the Official Opposition House Leader.

Right now the hon. minister of agriculture has the call.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the Official Opposition reached prestige status in misrepresenting the facts to Albertans. Yesterday in this House they demonized an Edmonton small business, and then they demonized Alberta's entire ag sector while debating Bill 26. Yesterday the current Leader of the Official Opposition said, in debating Bill 26: "Wow. You must really hate these workers. It's really shocking to me . . ."

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mr. Dreeshen: ". . . how much you guys must dislike people who work for farmers," and I don't know why you hate them so much.

Mr. Speaker, no one cares more for farm workers than farmers.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:32 by the Official Opposition House Leader.

We are at the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

School Head Covering Policies

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just yesterday the Edmonton Catholic school board meeting was adjourned early because of a peaceful, silent protest about an ongoing dispute about racial prejudice in school dress codes. The family of the boy at the centre of this dispute does not feel heard by the school or the board. Now, I thank the Minister of Education for having met with the family. She told them that she had received a report from Edmonton Catholic, a report that she's repeatedly promised that she would produce and table in the House. Will that minister table that report today, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would like to reiterate something I've said time and time again. No one should ever feel discriminated against based on race. I have received a report from the Edmonton Catholic school division, and I have met with the family. I'm awaiting some follow-up information before I move forward with next steps. The Education Act mandates that all schools are created with safe and caring school spaces, and I'm confident that that's what we have in our school system.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this minister also told the family that she would consider a review of the headwear policies at Edmonton Catholic schools, particularly the wearing of do-rags, and given that the minister previously stated that she's in favour of board autonomy, was the minister's promise to this family sincere, and if so, can she clarify how she intends to work with the board, while respecting their autonomy, to address and change this discriminatory policy?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I do respect board autonomy. I was a trustee for 11 and a half years and wore many hats throughout that time period. What I did share with the family was that I would be reviewing whether Edmonton Catholic followed board policy. That's what I've committed to doing, and that's what I will continue to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that clarity. Now, given that this minister came out strongly in October with a promise to resolve this issue but given that more than a month later the dispute is continuing and starting to interfere with the regular operation of a major school board and given that this government has shown that it's not shy about taking a direct hand in many aspects of the public service and given that all that's required to bring this to an end is a simple apology, Minister, what specific steps will you be taking to ensure that Edmonton Catholic comes to a resolution with this family?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I have said that I have received a report from the Edmonton Catholic school board. I have met with the family. I'm awaiting further information as far as my next steps, but I continue to advocate that the school board and the family continue discussions so that they can resolve it without interference from government.

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

Seniors' Benefit Program Funding

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is cutting off supports for seniors while lecturing them about needing to live within their means. While the minister is admonishing seniors about how they're costing more than this government is willing to pay, seniors are watching them splurge on private planes, fancy London hotels, and a \$4.7 billion giveaway, printed in black and white on page 144 of the UCP budget. Will the minister of seniors admit she was wrong to suggest that seniors are the ones who need a lesson in living within their means and apologize?

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

Ms Pon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to mention that we do care about seniors, and in this budget we increased by \$9 million the budget for Seniors and Housing. Just to refer to the question she asked, we do care. We continue to make a commitment to take care of our seniors.

Ms Sigurdson: Except they stopped indexing the Alberta seniors' benefit, and they've cut thousands of people off the drug plan. Therefore, they are cutting seniors' programs.

Mr. Speaker, this government seems to be thinking of cutting tens of thousands of seniors off these plans, and given that they think it's disrespectful to suggest that the Premier's \$200,000-a-year adviser stay in a hotel that doesn't have a vitamin C shower and a champagne bar, can the minister explain why she's trading away affordable medication for seniors so that the Premier's six-figure salary adviser can travel through London . . .

The Speaker: Order. Order. I generally find that when members don't use a preamble, they have ample time to get in their question. I don't think that was the case in the previous one.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the member talks about cutting seniors' benefits, this absolutely is a misrepresentation of information. The benefit we just eliminated is for seniors who are under 65 years old. By the way, the indexing is a temporary measure that will be reviewed once we have Alberta's financial house in order. Seniors understand we have to go through thoughtful measures right now, and in the long term we will protect the public services . . .

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

Ms Sigurdson: Given that this government is trading the needs of Alberta's seniors for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway and has created more investments in New Brunswick and Wisconsin than it has in Alberta, will the minister really look seniors in the eye and tell them that while this government isn't willing to pay for seniors' drug and income benefits, they're willing to subsidize Husky while it moves jobs and investments out of our province?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we will make no apology for our job-creation tax cut. It is a key policy plank that will attract investment, create jobs and opportunities. The members opposite increased corporate taxes by 20 per cent, sent investment out of this province by the billions of dollars, with it jobs and opportunities, and collected fewer corporate tax revenues the following three years. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod must ask a question.

Rural Police Service Funding

Mr. Reid: I must ask a question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government committed to addressing the rural crime crisis we are currently facing in Alberta. I was glad to see the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General taking this so seriously and touring the province to ensure that my constituents and all rural Albertans are heard. However, the NDP, in attempting to fearmonger about our budget, stated that the budget included cutting funding for police, including in rural areas like mine where the crisis has visible and damaging effects. Can the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General please clarify the status of police funding in Alberta?

2:40

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our budget increased funding for policing. We're proud of that. I'm also proud of the fact that we've gone out and consulted with Albertans across rural Alberta to talk about rural crime. We've taken decisive action to make sure that we have the strongest property rights possible in the country. We're proud of what we brought forward in Bill 27.

When it comes to the future of policing, we're continuing to talk with rural municipalities about the future of policing. You can't talk about that without talking about rural crime. We're hopeful that we can get to a new partnership going forward.

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

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that my riding of Livingstone-Macleod covers multiple towns, municipalities, and counties and given the wide variety of population-dependent funding models and given the reassurance that he just gave me that the police funding would not be cut, can the same minister explain the effects that a new funding model might have on municipalities of all of these different sizes and explain how this will better protect the victims of our rural crime crisis?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, if we proceeded with a new police funding model, every single dollar would go into more law enforcement across rural Alberta. But there also has to be accountability that comes with that. If you're asking somebody to contribute, you have to have accountability in governance. That means that rural municipalities have a seat at the table to help make sure that we set the priorities. Direction wouldn't come from Ottawa; it would come from the municipalities.

Mr. Reid: Thank you for that answer. Given that many smaller municipalities believe they need more protection than the service agreements they signed provide and given that these municipalities are often rural ones that cover vast expanses of our province and given that these areas are often the ones hardest hit by the rural crime crisis that we face, can the minister expand on what effect the budget and new police funding framework will have on these municipalities as they aim to address the large and growing issue that they face?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. If we proceeded with this, the feedback we heard from municipalities loud and clear is that it would need to be phased in

over numerous years to make sure that we allow for the gradual ramp up and ability to resource the additional law enforcement. We heard that loud and clear from the people on the ground. We have to make sure that there's accountability that's brought with it, that we can get those additional boots on the ground. If we proceeded, it would be a historic new partnership, a new way to proceed with policing in rural Alberta. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order. In 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Free Economy

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Alberta has a long and strong history of being an economically free engine that powers our great country, a province that rewards the hard work of its citizens and celebrates the contributions of our agriculture and energy industries and the numerous businesses that innovate and invest in our communities and in our families. To quote the late Margaret Thatcher: "A man's right to work as he will to spend what he earns to own property to have the State as servant and not as master . . . they are the essence of a free economy. And on that freedom all our other freedoms depend."

The previous government did not understand that, Madam Speaker. They took us on a path of reckless power grabs and attempted to restrict the freedoms that are engraved into our way of life. They launched an assault on the freedoms of Albertans through reckless increases to deficits, debt, taxes, and red tape. That is not the Albertan way. It goes against the embedded values of freedom and fiscal responsibility that have resulted in the success and prosperity of this great province.

Albertans know what is best and that if they keep their money in their own pockets, they will be responsible and they will be generous. They will take care of their families, friends, and neighbours. They will invest in themselves and invest in their communities. In Medicine Hat you just need to look at entrepreneurs like Chris Hellman, who owns franchises in Mr. Lube and Moxie's, or Hillary Beck, who owns the retail stores Friday's Image and Kitchen Kaboodle, to see the great contributions that Albertans make in their communities. It is important that we protect our ability to make these choices for ourselves and make decisions freely, away from the influence of government.

I stand here incredibly proud to call myself an Albertan, to be part of a province that welcomes all with open arms, a province that believes in giving those struggling a hand up and not a handout, a province that is generous and kind. From Leduc No. 1 to expansive ranchlands and canola fields, some would say that our province is like a perfect cup of coffee, strong and free.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Family and Community Support Services Program

Member Ceci: Madam Speaker, since 1966 the government of Alberta has partnered with municipalities and Métis settlements to fund preventative social services through the family and community support services program. This week the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta is holding its annual conference at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton. Their theme is

Resilient People, Strong Communities, and the attendees will discuss issues ranging from poverty reduction to reconciliation to housing.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, throughout my career as a social worker, alderman, and MLA I have witnessed the extraordinary work done by FCSS. I've seen vulnerable children gain confidence by taking part in community art programs. I've seen people in crisis receive the support they need at the Distress Centre. I've seen hungry Calgarians served a warm meal at the Alex community centre. These are all programs that benefit from FCSS funding, filling gaps left by other provincial programs. Unfortunately, under this government those gaps are getting wider, and the job of FCSS is getting more difficult.

While the NDP were in government FCSS support rose nearly 40 per cent, but the present government has frozen that support. The NDP government indexed some income supports such as AISH and seniors' benefits to inflation, but this government has scrapped that. Our government funded a school nutrition program, but this Premier would rather send his advisers for champagne than send our kids to school with breakfast. The UCP government expects programs like FCSS to fill the gaps these cuts create, but that's just not credible. They don't get it.

Mr. Speaker, people from around the province are gathering today to spend a few nights in the Fantasyland Hotel, but on Friday they will leave fantasyland, go home, and deal with the hard realities on the ground. Unfortunately for them, this government lives in fantasyland all year-round.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Women in the Energy Industries

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In under a century women have made phenomenal progress. However, even after getting the right to vote, women had an uphill battle. Whether it was equal pay or fighting to be accepted into certain professions, women have strived to do more and to be recognized as equal. Up north the heavy equipment operators were only men at one time. Now not only do you see women driving those 400-tonne trucks, but they are the preferred operators because they are simply better drivers.

It isn't just the big trucks women drive but entire companies, too. Take Syncrude: their managing director is a brilliant woman by the name of Doreen Cole. She has been the top executive at Syncrude for almost two years now, and she has done an admirable job in a tough time. She didn't just break the glass ceiling, Mr. Speaker, she shattered it to become Syncrude's first female top executive. That is only her latest position. Previously she was a senior VP at both Suncor and EPCOR, and this year she won a business award for female leadership.

Suncor also has brilliant female leaders. Senior Vice-President Shelley Powell is the prime example. Having worked at Suncor since 1995, Shelley, armed with her bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and her two master's degrees, has excelled at Suncor as a leader. She has applied her skill set to driving continuous improvement in the administrative and operational performances of Suncor. Now she's responsible for providing safer, more reliable operations of the base plant as well as the in situ assets. She is knowledgeable, wise, and well educated. Most importantly, she is a kind, caring leader who gives back to our Fort McMurray community.

Doreen Cole and Shelley Powell are trailblazers. Following in their path are many female leaders that are working their way to the executive boardroom. That's why this government is investing in

women. Women Building Futures is one way our government has committed to investing in equality in our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 29

Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Madu: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise and introduce Bill 29, the Municipal Government (Machinery and Equipment Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019.

Bill 29 will continue the good work we did after implementing Bill 7, the Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019. This legislation, Mr. Speaker, will expand the incentives included in that legislation to include machinery and equipment. If passed, this bill would give municipalities yet another tool in their tool box to attract investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. In accordance with section 19(1)(a) of the Auditor General Act as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I'm pleased to table the results report of the Auditor General of Alberta for the year ended March 31, 2019. Copies of this report will also be provided to all members.

Thank you very much, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article titled Doctor Asks Terminally Ill Kids What Really Matters In Life – Here Are Their Answers, from June 17, 2019, by Dr. Alastair McAlpine. It's great levity and a little bit of a reminder about what's important in life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House today to table the requisite number of copies of nearly 4,800 signatures from concerned citizens asking for the immediate termination of support and operation of the supervised consumption site in Lethbridge, organized and gathered by the Lethbridge Citizens Alliance.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a tabling.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As referenced in my question to the Minister of Health yesterday, I have five copies of the nondisclosure agreement that was presented to Dr. Remo Panaccione in order for him to be able to speak with the minister about this government's intentions for requiring the use of biosimilars over drugs prescribed by the patients' physicians.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by St. Albert.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a document from the *Calgary Herald* on the topic of a sole-source contract of some \$73,000 that was given to a firm with partisan ties to the governing party.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies from the *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* entitled *Scientists Reach 100% Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming*, a consensus among research scientists based on a review of over 11,000 peer-reviewed articles.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much., Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a constituent's communication with my office who is extremely upset about the current government in their move to move teachers' pensions. Very, very clear on this – I encourage all members to take a look at that – “keep your hands off my pension.”

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:30, 2:31, and 2:32 the hon. Official Opposition House Leader raised three points of order. I am guessing we might be able to speak to all three of them at the same time. I will provide you the opportunity to do so now.

Point of Order Improper Questions

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the first two can be grouped together, and the third one is in regard to a different member.

I rise on 23(h), (i), (j), and that's during question period, obviously, when the Member for Grande Prairie rose to ask questions to the minister of agriculture. First of all, in her question, I mean, not only did she make allegations, her questions were completely designed to create disorder, to attack another member in this House. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that her question, you know, not only attacked a member but identified the member, and her questions absolutely had nothing to do with government policy.

Now, I know that there is extreme latitude in this place as far as where and how members can ask questions on different topics, but I know that you yourself, Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions have encouraged members to remain within the space of policy. Her questions had nothing to do with government policy and were used to conflate comments that may have been made yesterday but were dealt with.

The issue for me is really the fact that using question period in the way that she did completely goes against our standing orders, where it really was abusive, insulting language that was used to create disorder. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that for those reasons, I'm seeking that the member withdraw her comments.

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I do agree with the Official Opposition House Leader that the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar were offensive but not really relevant to a point of order with regard to question period. It's clearly a matter of debate in the context that the hon. member is referring to. Also, if the Official Opposition House Leader wants to indicate that talking about agriculture legislation or how farmers are

consulted or impacted by agriculture legislation or are participating in agriculture legislation is somehow not government business, I do see why that party has no rural Alberta seats inside this Chamber, clearly, with those comments.

This is a matter of debate, and the agriculture policy around legislation associated with safety issues is certainly a matter of government business.

The Speaker: Thank you for both members' interventions. I would say that, certainly, in asking questions with respect to legislation that has passed with respect to Bill 6 or, in turn, Bill 26 there is, I think, some precedent to suggest that the questions were about government business.

Having said that – and I don't intend to find a point of order in this case – what I will do is provide some caution to the private member with respect to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 510. This particular section is on questions that are in order or are not in order, in this case, “make a charge by way of a preamble to a question.” In footnote 76

Speaker Scheer cautioned against the “growing trend” of oral questions preceded by preambles that “criticize the position, statements or actions of other parties, Members from other parties and, in some cases, even private citizens.”

Now, given the fact that the member was essentially quoting from *Hansard* with respect to the debate yesterday, I also believe that we have a matter of debate before us.

All of that is to say that I think it's important that all members remember that we are all responsible for the decorum of the Assembly and to consider such when crafting our questions. As such, the question was related to government business and is not a point of order at this time.

Hon. Official Opposition House Leader, on point of order 3. Would you like to withdraw point of order 3, or do you disagree?

Mr. Bilous: Correct. Withdraw.

The Speaker: Perhaps it is both, but that's neither here nor there.

Point of order 3 has been withdrawn. As such, I consider the matter concluded and dealt with.

We are at Ordres du jour.

3:00

Orders of the Day Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Firearms

41. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize and support the ability of Albertans to lawfully and in a responsible manner own and possess firearms and to engage in permitted activities involving the use of firearms, including but not limited to hunting and sport shooting.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move Government Motion 41. I'm excited to move that motion on behalf of Albertans in this place but also in support of my friend and colleague the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, who is a passionate advocate on this issue and, I know, will speak shortly on this important motion, as well as, of course, on behalf of the constituents of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Many of them are law-abiding firearms owners who use firearms in appropriate ways inside this province and are shocked to continue to see comments from the recently re-elected federal

Liberal government as well as the Official Opposition's federal party, Mr. Speaker, which you, I know, are well aware is the same party as the provincial party – structurally and leadershipwise they are the exact same organization – who continue to make disparaging comments associated with firearms owners inside this province and also indicate that in some ways the federal government may take action against law-abiding firearms owners inside this province to take away their property or in any way to be able to stop them from utilizing their property in appropriate ways inside this province.

We saw the former federal Liberal government do that with things like the registry and other laws that they brought into place, Mr. Speaker. I know that we have been excited to have seen recent federal victories underneath the Stephen Harper Conservatives, but we want to make it clear that this Assembly, this elected body of Alberta representatives, will stand with law-abiding gun owners inside this province.

Further to that, we want to see if the provincial NDP is going to choose to stand with their federal party, their federal leader. We do know that when it came to things like pipeline policy and energy policy, they have chosen to stand with their federal leader as well as their close ally Justin Trudeau, who campaigned to stop the energy industry – catch that: campaigned to stop the energy industry – to shut down pipelines. That's who their leader, the Official Opposition House Leader admitted that – not the Official Opposition House Leader. He did not publicly admit that. I apologize. I misspoke there. The Leader of the Official Opposition: I don't know if she knows that her Official Opposition House Leader may be indicating that he maybe voted for Andrew Scheer. I certainly hope that's the case. We do know that the Leader of the Official Opposition admitted – admitted – in the newspaper that she voted for her federal leader, who is trying to shut down the oil sands and is directly attacking the people of this province.

The question then comes with this motion. We'll see during the debate and the ultimate vote in this place if the provincial NDP is going to listen to their federal leader of the same party, their ultimate overseer of their provincial party, or are they going to stand with Albertans? We know how they stood when it comes to energy policy. They sold out Albertans to Justin Trudeau and to the federal NDP leader. What are they going to do with firearm owners inside this province? I can tell you . . .

An Hon. Member: Great question.

Mr. Jason Nixon: We'll see what happens, Mr. Speaker.

But I suspect that the government caucus in this place is going to vote to stand with firearm owners inside this province, and I look forward to hearing a robust debate on this important issue this afternoon.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 41. Under Standing Order 18(1)(a) this is a debatable motion. Is there anyone that would like to join the debate this afternoon? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Ms Glasgow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Government House Leader for placing this on the Order Paper. It is so important that we stand with our law-abiding firearm owners in this province. I'm going to start with a personal story because I think those go over pretty well in this place.

I grew up in a family that loves guns. We have all sorts of calibres. We go out sport shooting. We hunt regularly. You know, my very first time shooting a gun was a .22 Hornet, actually. We shot gophers and all sorts of things out in the prairies and had such a good time. The very first thing that I had to learn when I was a young girl was safety. I think that before I could walk, I knew that

you had to check the chamber of a gun before you could pick it up. I knew how to check to see if a gun was loaded before I could tie up my shoes. I know that under parental supervision, obviously, and a family's guidance and also just common sense, our law-abiding gun owners here in Alberta are safe and they're taking care. I just wanted to start with that.

The next gun that I was privileged to own was a .243 Remington. This is also known as Lucy in my family. Lucy is affectionately referred to as she has been the demise of many a deer. She's a good friend to me, old Lucy. My dad and I have taken many expeditions out in many ridings in this province, including the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's. We do a lot of sport shooting as well as taking care of business out there. We know that owning a legal firearm and using a legal firearm effectively can actually provide meat for the entire year. Not only does it provide you meat; it's delicious, Mr. Speaker.

The next gun that I got was something for Christmas. This is probably the best Christmas present ever, but I got a 7mm-08 Remington from my dad as well. This little beauty packs a punch, let me tell you. My 7mm-08, which is carefully locked, stored, and taken care of, has been another good friend of mine, in fact. It took down a moose and an elk in the past two years, provided meat for my family as well as provided some really good family bonding with me. Actually, it also provided some nutritious meat for the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and his family, perks of being friends with me, I guess. That's what a good old-fashioned legal firearm owner will get you.

I know that many members in this House understand just how important it is to own legal firearms as well. We heard many reports about rural crime increasing in this province. We know that criminals are deterred when legal firearm owners are armed. We're not advocating for anyone to be out there willy-nilly, but we know that this deterrence is a major factor. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that 29 per cent of Canadian homes possess one or more guns, with an average of three guns per home. There are 12.7 million legal firearms in Canada.

I say all of this because false gun rhetoric has been rampant. We saw this in the federal election. We've seen this dating back to before I was even thought of, I'm sure. You hear a lot of people saying: "You know, if we just took guns off the street, everything would be fine. If we just took guns out of the hands of everyone, we'd be fine." Not only is that demonstrably false; it attacks law-abiding citizens, and it attacks rural Albertans disproportionately.

You know, we see a lot of increased gang violence, but that's mainly in Toronto and Winnipeg, not to say that that's not important. We need to be cognizant of that, and we need to be curbing that. But these guns are not legally obtained, on average. These guns are taken normally from our border to the south of us, Mr. Speaker, and these guns are used to harm other people.

At the same time, when you're talking about a handgun ban – most of these incidents actually occur with rifles and shotguns. Now, by no means am I advocating for a ban of any kind of firearm, but to go after handguns and law-abiding handgun owners is totally not the right approach. These criminals want something that is easily concealable, so they'll saw off a shotgun or they'll saw off a rifle if they can't get their way. Of course, these tragic incidents with our neighbours from the south – and our hearts go out to them – are tragic. They deserve to be addressed. But once again, going after law-abiding gun owners like many of the members of this Chamber and their families is not the answer.

One thing that people often get misconstrued is that they say: it's so easy to get a gun; it's so easy to do all of these things. That couldn't be more far from the truth. Getting a gun in Canada isn't easy, in fact, and many who talk about this have never been further

than walking through Bass Pro Shops on their way to the rest of the mall to obtain one. First, you have to take a firearm safety course. This covers the evolution of firearms and ammunition, operating the action, safe handling and caring procedures, how to load a magazine, the care of your firearm, responsibility of firearm users, safe storage, display, transportation, handling. Then you have to complete an exam, and you have to get over 80 per cent on that to pass the course. Also, if you want to obtain a handgun, you have to get a restricted PAL, so that's another test. There are many, many safeguards in place to make sure that people who should not be owning firearms do not own them. But once again, taking them away from the rancher who has to shoot the coyotes who are attacking his calves is not the answer.

3:10

There are robust rules around storing guns, including removing the bolt, storing it in a container that can't be broken into, and unloading restricted weapons. Obviously, Canadians are respecting these rules, and Albertans are respecting these rules, and we have an obligation, especially as the only party with rural members in this House, to be standing up for those law-abiding gun owners.

I mean, I'm sure the opposition is going to get up and talk about crime rates and how catastrophic it is. I mean, I heard them reference gun violence in their comments, which obviously is a very important issue. But let's talk about crime for a second. Criminals are not going to obtain a legal firearm. They are going to go somewhere else. They're going to saw off the end of a shotgun. They're going to find another way, south of the border, to find themselves a firearm and do with it what they want to do. Taking those guns away, like I said, from cattle ranchers, from people like my dad, from people who are providing for their families is not the answer.

A really good story I heard, actually, about our really awesome hunters and gamesmen was in Medicine Hat not too long ago. The executive director of the food bank was telling me that a young boy shot his very first doe, and he actually donated it back to the food bank. What a horrible firearm owner, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, *Hansard* doesn't always pick up on sarcasm, as another member has noted in the past couple of days, but obviously I'm being sarcastic. This guy is fantastic. This young man went out and harvested his very first animal and then donated it to people who need it. Like, I can't think of anything more Albertan than that.

Criminals also aren't taking safety courses. They're not doing any of this. They're not consenting to legal background checks. They're not doing anything that somebody like the members of this Assembly or the people in rural Alberta would do. They're doing things that they shouldn't be doing to begin with, so telling them to go through some bureaucratic process that takes forever as well as to go to a store and purchase a firearm legally: it's not going to happen, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, restricting the sale of those firearms is not the answer. We know that the vast majority of gun violence we see in Canada is committed with illegally obtained guns.

One thing you hear a lot of, and I think this is partially because our media – I mean, I saw it in the *Toronto Star* not long ago – was going after Bill C-71. Now, this whole motion is largely in response to that because the recent Liberal policies on guns are knee-jerk reactions to an issue that they really don't understand. I would be surprised if Justin Trudeau has ever picked up a firearm. I'd be surprised if he's ever been in Bass Pro Shops or Cabela's, to be completely honest with you. It's not on the fancy streets in Toronto, so I can't see him really frequenting that.

Bill C-71 was passed in the House of Commons in June of 2019, but the standing committee on public safety did not consult with

Canadian gun owners, and they moved time allocation on the bill. They opened up the door to a long gun registry and potential confiscation of weapons from law-abiding gun owners. This cracks down on these gun owners' ability to transport guns even to a shooting range.

Now, Rachael Harder, the MP for Lethbridge, tabled a petition against this bill. This petition was started by a then 15-year-old Mr. Ryan Slingerland from Coalhurst, Alberta . . .

Mr. Schow: Hear, hear.

Ms Glasgo: The Member for Cardston-Siksika is pretty excited about that.

. . . and he got over 86,000 signatures in just three months. I'm told that this is one of the most signed petitions in the House of Commons' history, so that's pretty impressive. This just goes to show that there are Canadians that care about this issue. Specifically, there are Albertans that care about this issue.

I'll be really interested to see if the members opposite take a moment to even think about speaking to this motion, if they even take a motion to defend rural Albertans. I know they didn't in their last budgets. They didn't in their last four years. But, hey, here's an opportunity. I'll pass them the ball and see if they'll take it, but who knows?

Instead of something like C-71, efforts should be focused on deterring youth from joining gangs; creating opportunities for gainful employment, which is exactly what this government is doing; stopping robberies in rural communities, like you see with Bill 27; enhancing mental health supports, like you see with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Our government is doing all of these things, Mr. Speaker. We are taking action on crime and criminal activity in this province, but what we're not doing – and I repeat: we are not doing – is going after law-abiding citizens. Now, I know the members opposite as well as their federal NDP counterparts would have you do that. They would have you go after Mark and Sally who own a ranch in Brooks. They would have you go after any member of this House who wishes to go sport shooting. But that's ridiculous, and it's not the answer.

Now, you know, in my time getting to know firearms and hanging out with my dad, I've learned a lot of things about firearms usage, and one of those things is that you have to be responsible. My family is nothing but responsible, and I know that members of this House are nothing but responsible when it comes to the care and ownership of their firearms. To blame these people, to blame law-abiding citizens for the actions of so few is preposterous.

We know that right now we are in a rural crime epidemic, Mr. Speaker. We heard yesterday from the Minister of Indigenous Relations about people coming on to his property. We've heard from other members of this House just how scary it is to have somebody pull into your driveway at 3 in the morning, not knowing who they are. Now, if you can deter that in any way, why not? Of course, nobody's advocating for any kind of harm to anyone, but you need to be cognizant of the fact that this is happening.

What's happening on the other side of the House is to push an ideology. You know, I'd be curious to know how many of them actually believe in it. Or do they just read their speaking notes off? I'd be curious to know if any of them have actually talked to rural Albertans about what they're facing. I do. I hear from people coming into my office talking about how frightening it is that they can't get a police officer to come to their home, or I hear from the Minister of Indigenous Relations, who gave an impassioned plea to the other side of the House to stand up for families like his, who are facing crisis. To me it's just sad.

You know, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the United Nations reports that Canada ranks third amongst developed western countries, behind the United States and Norway, in civilian ownership of firearms. These individuals are hunters, farmers, sport shooters. They're not violent criminals, and they shouldn't be treated as such. The federal government should treat the over 2.1 million Canadians who own firearms properly. They shouldn't be treating them as bad actors.

Justin Trudeau says that he cares about the interests of Albertans. You know what? I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt. I hope that he does reach out to Albertans. I also hope that he knows that if C-71 is to be enforced and law-abiding gun owners are to be slandered in a way where they would be treated as criminals, Albertans won't take to that kindly. Our province rejected his party entirely. Something went on in Edmonton Strathcona, but I respect the results of that election. If Justin Trudeau really cares, he will listen to and respect the concerns of legal gun owners. I know that I respect them, I know that I hear them, I know that I am one, and I know that this side of the House will do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very excited to speak to this motion. I have a few different elements that I want to speak to in the motion. First, though, I do want to just respond to some comments that the previous speaker made. You know, comments insinuating or inferring or making assumptions about how the other side may feel about a motion, I think, are dangerous to the extent that until members have risen to speak to it, we don't know how they feel.

I'll start off by saying that I will be supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk a little bit about the motion and where I stand, and then I want to talk about the fact that this motion doesn't bind the government to do anything. This isn't about legislation. This doesn't bind the federal government to take an action or not take an action. For those reasons, you know, we are using valuable time in the House to debate a motion that I know is important to rural Albertans. Absolutely. There are lots of city dwellers that are gun owners. In fact, my broader family all own firearms, responsibly of course.

3:20

I'll start off by saying that, you know, again, the reason I support this motion, Mr. Speaker, is that Albertans and, I would argue, Canadians that are lawful and that lawfully own firearms should have the right to own those firearms. I can tell you, and where I do agree with the previous speaker, that I think it is ridiculous for any government to try to bring in laws to make it more difficult for law-abiding citizens, claiming that that's going to deter criminals. I think that's naive. Criminals aren't buying their rifles from their local hardware store and then registering them and then going to commit crimes. I don't believe it makes our streets any safer nor does it help with that issue of violent crimes.

You know, I do believe that, again, the need or the desire for especially rural Albertans – the members spoke about coyotes and others attacking farm animals. They absolutely need to be able to take care of their animals, their wildlife, and obviously in remote parts of rural Alberta they're far from fish and wildlife or others that could assist them with unwanted predators. Again, I appreciate the desire, and in fact governments – any government – shouldn't be standing in their way, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to say that I myself and I know that several members of the NDP opposition caucus have gone to firing ranges. Last year I fired at clay pigeons for the first time. That was a hoot, I must say, Mr. Speaker. I have very good friends of mine that are hunters, including my in-laws. What I can tell you is that I was supposed to take my hunting course last fall, ran out of time, you know, because of the responsibilities in the House, but I will and plan to get my hunting licence – absolutely – and my firearms safety course as well. That's on the to-do list. I know that many members are responsible gun owners or hunters.

I'm not going to take up a ton of time. I know other members in the House want to speak. The element of this that I struggle with a bit, Mr. Speaker: I support the motion and understand where the government is coming from on this motion; I fail to see how this affects actual government policy or will effect change. I get that, you know, members may speak to the fact that this will send Ottawa a message. I'm not sure if a motion debated in this House that's nonbinding will send the government a message.

We know that we have other pieces of legislation that are in front of us that do require attention and debate. A motion like this is good for Albertans to see that we support them, members from all parties in this House, and support their rights to possess and own firearms. For that, I think now they see clearly that there are members from all sides of the House – in fact, I think I have a colleague or two that will also speak to this motion. I won't ruin the suspense of whether or not they're going to be supporting it. I'll let them speak for themselves.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion. You know, we stand with all Albertans and Canadians who are gun owners, who want to possess and responsibly use their firearms. With that, I will take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is anyone wishing to provide a brief question or comment?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Mr. Getson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To me, seeing this motion here today was like Christmas. You know, make your puns or your pardons or anything else. It's like redneck Christmas today. It's great to actually see this. Part of it is some of the stigmas that are around firearms ownership. The member opposite had mentioned that a number of firearms owners in the city actually have them. Absolutely. When you look at gun owner statistics, you're more likely to own a handgun if you're a white-collar worker. You're more likely to own a shotgun or a rifle if you're blue-collar or live in the country, and that's just how it goes. Then there's a bunch of others like us that have a little bit of each. My gosh, it's fantastic.

Growing up in rural Alberta, one of the first things that we learned was that equipment will hurt you. Machines can hurt you if used improperly. There are lots of tools on the farm that are kind of scary, and they can hurt you if they're not used properly. Firearms were top of the list. As a young lad that was the first thing you kind of learned right off the hop, so no different than the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. You're taught that.

Now, my own personal story with that is that we had a few different firearms on the farm. You know, getting off the school bus at night, especially in the spring and the fall, one of my jobs was to go back and check cutlines. It was to go back and check fences, check on the cattle, and everything else. That little .22 that I was taught from a young age to use and respect and everything else, well, that was my travelling companion, that and the dog. I'll tell

you that the time that we spent back in the bush going and checking on the animals and a couple of times firing a couple of shots near some coyotes that were going towards calves, that's kind of what we had growing up with it.

You know, as I progressed and got off the farm a little while later, you kind of look back at that. I was thinking of some of the significance when you have family heirlooms that are passed down. Well, some folks have tiaras. Some folks have coffee cups, other ones. There was this 1894 lever-action Winchester. My Grandpa Getson had passed away before I was born, but that old rifle: to think that my grandpa one year had been out there hunting a deer and he had actually used that rifle, and my father used that rifle. I had my chance to use that rifle when I was old enough. It's kind of one of those things that kind of stuck with us. There's also that side of it where folks potentially down in Ottawa and Toronto don't understand that connection. It's not just something that goes bang in the middle of the night.

The social media that I've seen over C-71, you know, after the Justin Trudeau government got back in place is already starting to ramp up, the fact that we're taking questions during heritage trust about individuals coming and asking if our group is supporting assault weapons. There's this misnomer that responsible firearms ownership lends itself to assault weapons. Again, if you're going to follow that train of thought, there's a bunch of misinformed folks out there that think modern sporting rifles and handguns, as an example, are considered assault weapons. Well, they're not. Those have been illegal in Canada since 1977. Any of these crimes that have been reported: there's never been one incident of an assault weapon that's been used in these crimes that has been obtained legally. Now, some of the grandfathered items or the museum pieces they have – so I kind of wanted to do away with that as well.

The concern that we're seeing here, and one of the reasons why, I think, the government brought this forward was to show that, yeah, we have a little bit of a different culture out west. Forty per cent of Canadians own firearms. You know, if you're looking at that – again, the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has stated that we only rank third in the world. Actually, we're on par with the United States when it comes down to shotguns and rifles, but we don't have any of the crime that they have. I think it has to come down to how we utilize these things, how we're trained with them.

Now, I've got a small confession to make. I never played golf until I was in my 20s. I never got around to it. It was always something that was a little bit foreign. I actually had a mechanic from the work I was doing at the time, Aubro Services, Mike Bouchande. He took me under his wing, and he taught me how to play golf. The only reason why I learned how to play golf, Mr. Speaker, was that I was at that age when some of my friends were starting to get married off. It was at a stag event, I guess, if you would, that my friend was going to go golfing. Being the type of person I am, the last thing I wanted to do is show up there not knowing how to do something and cause potential harm or disarray to the nice golfers that I've seen on the television shows and all that. Just imagine me rolling up and hammering out balls in the wrong direction. That would be pretty bad. Mike took me under his wing, and he spent some time with me that night learning how to shoot the golf ball and doing that. He brought an old bag of clubs that he had, and we did that out in the parking lot one night after work. When I went to the golf course, I then didn't feel so foolish. I felt like I wasn't going to be a safety issue with anybody else and had a heck of a good time. I took that on, did something a little bit different, made some new friends.

My new friends from the city, well, they'd never fired a rifle, so quid pro quo in that case. We actually ended up going out to a gun range, and we took the time to do that. They then, too, developed

an appreciation. No different than the member who's never shot skeet before, who took it up, and in his words he had a hoot. So it's breaking down some of those barriers.

The other thing that's really interesting with golf is that it takes a heck of a lot of time. Mr. Speaker, I don't know about you, but I can barely find enough time to make it home to see my wife and kids sometimes with this new job let alone try to book off a full day to go golfing. But I can with my kids, because I'm fortunate enough to have space on my own property, go down with my three girls and my son and take some time and actually go and shoot tin cans with a pellet gun or to go in the back. My daughter Cora developed an allergy to pumpkins. This little girl, who's nine years old now, for the last four years hasn't been able to carve a pumpkin. We've had to do that. But I'll tell you that taking and putting a couple of little marks on that pumpkin's face, and the smile on her face when I took the .22 out back and got her to carve that pumpkin remotely: priceless. I mean, those are going to be memories of carving pumpkins. It's a family tradition in our house now to carve pumpkins every year.

3:30

It's very interesting to see how, you know, the kids respect that. They're not out playing video games. They're not playing first-person shooter games. They don't even make things go bang, like some kids may have done. We've actually developed a respect for these tools, these firearms. That would be the last thing that these kids would ever do. They understand what can happen, the consequences of it. They're responsible for those actions. So there are some little things that we get to do out on the farm.

One of the other big events that I had was, you know, growing up and packing that .22 around and shooting cans. My uncle Joe Oleksiew asked my dad one day if I could go to a turkey shoot. Now, I'd never been to a turkey shoot before. I was actually thinking we were going there to shoot turkeys, Mr. Speaker. But as it turns out, what you're doing there when you get to that gun range, well, then, you're shooting paper targets. The person with the best score on there, well, you end up winning. I didn't win. I know you were waiting for that.

The technique of actually popping tin cans and moving down range and hitting moving targets was completely different. So then my Uncle Joe taught me about control. He taught me about breathing techniques. He also taught me how to watch out for those other people on the firing line because, again, when you're hunting or in the bush, it's different. Then you're learning about that.

Now, when I originally started buying my own firearms, it was literally because of the long gun registry. People can box things in a corner and hope that it never happens. Does everyone remember the story of was it Sleeping Beauty, Mr. Speaker, the spinning wheel? I would hate to get this one wrong. The whole premise of that is that you're going to lock away all these spinning wheels, and that little Sleeping Beauty is never going to prick her finger on the needle. Lo and behold – we all know what happens – she conks out and gets woken up by Prince Charming.

When I first had my son, I didn't have my own firearms. It was kind of that story that stuck in the back of my mind. I had grown up with them. Now I brought this new little person into the world, and I was going to be responsible for him. With my job I was always travelling and on the road. Some of the concerns I had were: what happens if my son Leif ends up over at a friend's place? What happens if his friends don't actually have the same control on firearms that I was brought up with? This is their friend's house, and they're used to playing with toy guns and all those things. What happens if? It was that breaking point and deciding: well, should I be responsible and teach them the right way to do it, or should I take

the chance and have the folks down in Ottawa and Toronto make those decisions and potentially have something go wrong? Well, I chose the first way. It was to actually have those firearms and expose him to them.

Now, rolling the clock forward, I'd never really worked with pistols much, but I had worked with some folks that had. They had trained and served formally as well. So I ended up taking this firearms training course through Sierra riflecraft, Ben Klick. He had brought some friends in that also do some training. They do handguns and carbines and transition training as well. They were former Airborne. They're currently serving members of our police force. Now, at this course, a pretty small group of folks, there were also active duty snipers. When you're sitting and you're training with these folks, they teach you complete control. Safety, safety, safety, safety. They could take you and break down your own firearm. They could put you through the malfunctions and the procedures. They had me, you know, from the gun range guy who goes out and shoots a gun, a pistol maybe, once or twice every couple of years to being proficient at drawing and holstering and being on target in three rounds down range under a second. Complete control through jamming situations, your carbine transitions. You have to clear it and do everything else. Safety, safety, safety, and proficiency. So all of those skill sets.

I asked them at that time, you know, because it was all adults at this course, I said, "Do you allow kids here?" They said, "Well, how old?" And I said, "Well, my son is 14." They said, "Well, we don't, but under the condition of what you've shown us, and, you know, if he comes here and doesn't show those characteristics, he'll be bounced." And it was a \$700 course, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't a cheap thing. So they allowed him in. My son picked up those proficiencies, those little skill sets that I taught him all along. He was using the AR-15s. He was using a .226 for a side arm as well for the pistols. And he was all through that.

Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, when you transition to the end of your training course – and he met a lot of professionals out there as well; lots of doctors and lawyers and such – they do everything under a timer, under duress, under stress. So if anyone ever has to pull a firearm out, you know, heaven forbid, in the case of an emergency or they're going to go shoot that first deer, your heart rate is up, everything is elevated. What they do is that everything's under a stress environment, so they're timing you, and you're essentially firing against the person next to you at targets at different distances. You've got live targets, moving targets, stationary targets, different positions, everything else. Well, lo and behold, my 14-year-old son ended up winning that against serving police officers, against some former military people, and actually he beat me in it as well, which was a little humbling, but a very proud dad moment.

Now, my son, like the member opposite, was going to take his hunter's training course. Well, he ended up taking it in school. Coming back, my son was aghast at what was being taught in that school for the actual control and the way they managed those firearms. This is a teacher teaching the course who didn't have the same level of safety as the firearms owners or the firearms trainers that we went with.

Again, part of this is understanding who we are as Canadians, understanding who we are as Albertans. Rural crime: we've talked about that. One of the leading messages I had asked out in our area was how many folks in the audience, in an audience of 200 – and this probably won't be a surprise for your demographics either, Mr. Speaker – owned firearms. We look at the statistics across Canada: 40 per cent, basically, arguably. Eighty per cent of the people in that room put their hands up.

Now, again, coming back to what types of firearms, I was talking to a bunch of them. It's not just the old lever-action rifles that everyone sees or the old John Wayne big loop that you're seeing in the movies anymore. When we are talking about firearms, predominantly most of them are semiautomatic firearms now, and a large portion of them, at least 25 to 30 per cent, are modern sporting rifles. These are the evil black rifles that everyone's talking about. Myself, in my gun cabinet: I don't own a bolt gun. I have the old lever-action 30-30, and that's as close as I get. Everything else I have is of that stream, so it's a semiautomatic-type rifle.

Now, the reason why I picked those wasn't because of the movies. It wasn't because of some other silly thing. Honestly, it's because of engineering. These types of platforms have been out for at least 60 years. In the last 20 years their accuracy and their reliability have increased substantially. You've got a company like Alberta tactical firearms out of Calgary. The gentleman is a former police officer. He ends up changing his vocation. He ends up buying a machine shop, and in a number of years he's building trailers, those things. He develops some respiratory issues. He ends up transitioning over and building high-quality, Alberta-made firearms.

Now, if you're familiar with the AR-15 platform, those are considered restricted, verboten. You can only take them out and use them at gun ranges. The actual firing principles of them, being a direct impingement with a semiautomatic nature: there isn't any ruling on it. So what this gentleman designed was a different fit-up, so you're operating your lower receivers. Essentially, if you took it to the uninformed and didn't know the internal workings, threw 'em on the bench, you wouldn't know the difference between that and an AR-15. This gentleman with good old Alberta ingenuity came up with a way of having this thing legally owned as a nonrestricted firearm, Mr. Speaker. He has the modern hunter, which is in .308 calibre and up, so the big game stuff, and then a modern varmint: wonderful, finely accurate rifles. In fact, some of these rifles have been winning competitions against the bolt guns, so a really good product.

If you look at North Eastern Arms or Black Creek Labs, they're out of Ontario. They've done something similar. Diemaco, if you look at them: that's the Colt Canada version. These things are renowned all over the world.

Canadian shooting sports: you have Elcan, which provides some of the highest quality optics in the world. They're Canadian made. There's an entire industry out there that's devoted to this. Over \$141 million a year goes into shooting paper targets.

Myself, when I go out hunting, I am the worst hunter ever. I'm usually rushed in the last couple of days of the year, but it's not about that. It's about me and my son going out, and it's like me going back and sharing some of those traditions and going back to some of the old farm properties and walking those old cutlines again. It's that rite of passage.

That's the thing that folks in Toronto and Ontario – they're making these well-intended gun laws – aren't understanding. It's not the people that go through all the courses, that go through all the training, that go through all the licensing to get their firearms and to use them and to control them responsibly that are the issue. The issue is the ones that aren't. Mr. Speaker, if you make it more and more difficult for the people who go through all this length of exercise and have it that every five years you're screened through the police and you have all the questions that are filled out by your spouse and those close to you, the only ones that are going to be left with these things are the criminals. To me, that's far more dangerous than anything else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I might just ask for some discretion from the House. If you're interested in shooting clays and playing golf, you might just come down to the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and visit the Silver Willow for sporting clays. You can essentially do both.

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

I see that no one has risen, so I will call upon the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by Central Peace-Notley.

3:40

Ms Phillips: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in support of this motion, Government Motion 41, a perfectly reasonable government motion on a matter of federal jurisdiction expressing a perfectly reasonable set of sentiments on the topic of firearms ownership, including but not limited to hunting and sport shooting. That is excellent.

I want to give a special shout out to Ted Feller over at Marksman Guns & Sports. It's on 13th Street North. I had the pleasure, I guess it would be about a year and a half ago, of doing an announcement in Ted's shop, surrounded by a lot of heads mounted on the walls, to reduce the fees for hunting licences for senior citizens in the province. That was a really fun day because we also announced a mentorship program for seniors to mentor some of the young hunters that are taking their hunting certification through AHEIA, the Alberta hunter education folks. It was a really great opportunity to visit with constituents who would be paying less for their hunting licences, folks over 65, just as they do for their fishing licences.

That was one of my great memories as a minister. That was a fun day. I remember the federal government did something mildly ridiculous in that I had to answer questions on that day in the dead of summer, so the poor guys behind me, who were all over 65, had to stand there as I responded to the national media in both official languages under a banner of heads on a matter that had nothing to do with their discounted hunting licence.

I grew up in rural Alberta. I remember the 1980s and being somewhat confused when gun ownership and gun laws began to become a matter of national debate, because I was essentially a farm kid. I remember being a little bit confused as to what the problem was here because I didn't know some of the axes of conflict that gun ownership was beginning to lay bare between urban and rural and lawful gun ownership and use of firearms for hunting or for sport shooting and some of the consequences of an illegal gun trade that was essentially popping up in our cities at that time and has persisted to this day.

I do remember over time, when I was a kid, responding to some of the changes for gun ownership. For example, different locked cabinets and all of those kinds of things came in over time. My dad, not being a details guy at all, relied on my mom to make sure that all of the permits were in order, all the cabinets were correct, and all of those sorts of things because – my dad has left us now, and I don't think even if here he would take offence – if it was left to him, I think we would have very quickly become non law-abiding firearms owners in my household if it wasn't for my mom making sure that all of the Is were dotted and the Ts were crossed.

Certainly, you know, when my dad was around, shooting tin cans in the backyard with the .22 – we certainly had more than enough space to do that – it was a thing that my sister and I did a lot, with my dad's quasi safety conscious supervision and my mom's more than safety conscious supervision to make up for it.

Over the last couple of years, when I was environment minister, I got to have a lot of interactions with the Alberta hunter education folks and other folks locally from the gun club as well. Some of the friendships that I made at the gun club in Kananaskis I really appreciated. They were having some issues related to some of their

environmental permitting, and some things had changed with respect to their location in Kananaskis, wildlife corridors, and other pieces. They were having a hard time navigating all of that. You know, some of the concerns of the department I think were pretty fair enough, and some of them needed to be worked through, so I went out with the gun club in Kananaskis. Like I said, I had shot a .22 a lot when growing up, but I had never used other firearms, so I, too, got to learn how to shoot clay pigeons.

I went with Danielle Larivee, who is the former Member for Lesser Slave Lake, and she was much better at it than I was because they're loud and they're heavy, and when you're five foot two, the thing can really put you on your back foot if you're not quite ready for it. I got better over time with the folks from the Kananaskis Gun Club teaching me. One of the people was, of course, Cam Westhead, who was one of my helpers that day. He wasn't a full instructor, but he is also a member of the Kananaskis Gun Club. I'm pretty sure I can report to the House that over time the department did ensure that the Kananaskis Gun Club can stay where they are, which is fantastic, with a few modifications to their lease with the department. That was an excellent outcome of my visit there, certainly more excellent than my actual skeet shooting performance, which, I think it's fair to say, would be charitably described as fair to middling.

Obviously, I support this motion. I have no issue with it whatsoever. I believe that there are a number of lawful gun owners who also support this motion. Certainly, when we're looking at organized crime activity or other criminal activity, these are not folks that are stopping in at Marksman Guns & Sports on 13th Street North. There is a whole illegal gun trade that bubbles up from the United States that does need to be dealt with. That's got nothing to do with ordinary people who are simply pursuing hobbies of various kinds.

The final piece, though, that I will touch on in terms of my comments on this motion, Mr. Speaker, is that, you know, it's a pretty mild motion. It doesn't really even call on the federal government to do anything. I'm glad that it makes the government backbenchers feel like they are heard in the overall government agenda. I'm glad that they now feel that somehow the Premier's office and others heard them in terms of wanting to articulate some of the things that were important to them. That's really what this motion is about. It's about keeping the wheels on caucus and the backbench. It doesn't really contain anything that is even mildly controversial. It's not even really about calling on any other order of government to do something. You know, I do think it's unfortunate that we are using this time to essentially engage in, you know, caucus solidarity exercises rather than actually moving forward with bill debate or other things that are actually part of our work and our legislative agenda.

You know, be that as it may, there are all kinds of ways that Premiers' offices and sort of the centre of politics keep the wheels on the bus with respect to caucus solidarity. They thought that this was a nice way to do it and engage the backbench. That's very nice for them, but I do think that in this House our time could be perhaps more productively used than this way.

Having said that, happy to support this motion, and happy to cede the floor to my colleagues who, I'm sure, will describe some of their views on the matter as well.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and talk about Government Motion 41:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize and support the ability of Albertans to lawfully and in a responsible manner own and possess firearms and to engage in permitted activities involving the use of firearms, including but not limited to hunting and sport shooting.

Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans deserve and have a right to possess lawful property in a responsible manner. I think the left's answer to this situation, one of them, was the long gun registry that was imposed in 1993. When the long gun registry was brought in, it was supposed to be at a cost of \$2 million, and we know that that ended up costing I think close to \$2 billion. Of course, during that time period I believe that the stats suggested that probably 70 per cent of firearms were not registered, so it was obviously a dismal failure.

3:50

To that point, I'll just read this short quote from the Ontario police commissioner. I think this is from 2003, so after 10 years of the federal government's long gun registry. It says:

We have an ongoing gun crisis including firearms related homicides lately in Toronto, and a law registering firearms has neither deterred these crimes nor helped us solve any of them. None of the guns we know to have been used were registered, although we believe that more than half of them were smuggled into Canada from the United States. The firearms registry is long on philosophy and short on practical results considering the money could be more effectively used for security against terrorism as well as a host of other public safety initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, we've seen governments in the past fail in this regard when it comes to trying to restrict or take away the rights of Canadians when it comes to firearms.

I think we can all agree that safety should be number one, and that's, of course, you know, widely understood and widely respected. Safety is the key issue in dealing with firearms. I know that in my family, my home, and my community – and I'll include my business, too – the number one thing that we always consider is safety first when it comes to dealing with firearms.

Crime is a separate issue. Obviously, punishing law-abiding citizens that own firearms is not the answer to crime. We know that being tough on crime, especially gun crimes, is a far greater deterrent. People that commit crimes with guns should be severely punished for that crime. We know that just merely possessing a firearm is not a crime; nor should it be considered that.

Now, the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat talked about her favourite firearm, Lucy. I do have a favourite of my own, and it's called The Magic Magnum. It's a 7 mm Remington rifle with a Kevlar stock, a custom mountain rifle, that I've had for many years. It's looking a little worse for wear. It's been used by many people from all over the world, from all over Alberta, and from all over our community and by my family to take aim. It's known for, you know, the one-shot kill. That's The Magic Magnum. That's kind of my favourite firearm in my home.

Now, we know that hunters use firearms. Of course, I think it's widely accepted across Alberta that having hunters manage wildlife is the most accepted way to manage wildlife. Obviously, hunters could use bows, crossbows, or firearms, guns, but there are many areas and many species where it's not practical to use bows all the time. If we want to manage wildlife, we need to be able to harvest them effectively, efficiently, and in a humane manner, so that's why so many hunters use firearms in that sport.

We also have the target shooters, shooters that use firearms for recreation. You know, shotgun users will shoot sporting clays. We have a lot of target shooters in Alberta, and those are perfectly acceptable ways to use firearms and to enjoy them for recreation.

Now, many people in my constituency own and use firearms, and they use them respectfully and safely. Of course, we don't want to

see government interfere with that right to enjoy our property legally and lawfully and safely. Just on the weekend, for instance, I was able to harvest a white-tailed deer, and I was able to bring in some of the meat yesterday and feed many of the MLAs on this side of the House. It was a great opportunity to enjoy the natural bounty that we have here in Alberta. Of course, that was taken with a firearm.

We need to stand up for Albertans. We know how Albertans feel overwhelmingly on this issue of firearms. Federally, we know that the Liberals don't see things quite the way we do when it comes to this. We also know that the federal NDP, which is of course the same party that the members opposite belong to – we know that, for instance, the federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh, is urging the Prime Minister to immediately give cities the leeway to ban handguns. So here we have the leader of the NDP urging the Prime Minister to encourage the banning of handguns in Canada. Of course, when we see things like that, we know how they feel, really, about firearms. They obviously voted for that party in this past federal election and a leader that has taken this position. When asked about Bill C-71, Leader Singh said: yes, right now our caucus is in support of this bill. That is a quote.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's good to hear that there is some support on the NDP bench for this motion. Maybe they feel they can support it because they feel that it has no teeth or it has no substance or for whatever reason, but I would love to see the members on the NDP side go to their federal leader and stand up to him and stand up to their federal party and support Albertans and support this motion on a federal level. That's when we will truly see how the members opposite feel about the lawful ownership of firearms by Albertans.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I think this motion is a good one to send a message to Ottawa. Like I said, I would encourage the NDP opposite to take that to their federal leader and see if we can have a more positive conversation federally on this matter.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has some comments to make.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. It's an honour to rise here and give a few thoughts in support of Motion 41. I just want to get involved in this caucus solidarity exercise, if that's what this is. I think it's a great use of our time. I feel like I've had far, far more frivolous endeavours in this House. I think we all know that there's pressure on firearm owners from our federal government, and this is a great motion showing support for our law-abiding citizens and firearm owners. Most of my comments have been echoed by my caucus mates. You know, I think firearms are part of our culture. They're a useful tool for farms and ranches. Hunting and sporting clays: great, great pastimes. It's really part of our culture.

I was just going to share a little story. I remember being about 12. You know, growing up I had the Daisy BB gun, and that was kind of your pal. You'd head out, and you might get a gopher, shoot a pigeon, and learn how guns work and get better at the craft. I remember I had an uncle visit from Scotland. I'd never met the man before, and I could immediately tell he was a very strange, strange cat. He'd been everywhere in the world. He'd done everything. He'd been to Alaska, South America, all through Europe. He'd taken every tour. I remember just watching in sheer amazement as he crawled around on the hillside with an old lever action .22 of my dad's and was shooting gophers. I couldn't believe it. He was crawling and doing little rolls. It was the most bizarre thing I've

ever seen, but the point is that when he got done, afterwards I remember him telling my dad: I've been everywhere, and that was absolutely the most fun I've ever had, shooting gophers at your place today. Then he did a really creepy thing. He piled up the gophers and asked that we take his picture. I thought that was a little bizarre. Still, you could see the joy it brought him.

I would also just like to touch on, you know, that I did quite a bit of hunting as a younger guy. I don't seem to have the time now, but I really enjoy having hunters come onto our land. I just got a text from a guy that said: thank you so much for letting my son come out and shoot his first deer. These were strangers before they called. They'll probably be back. They're friends now. This is part of our culture that brings people together.

4:00

I'd also like to say, you know, living in remote rural Alberta – we talked about the fear of rural crime, and I know the Member for Edmonton-McClung told a story yesterday about the fear he felt from those wind chimes that he thought were an intruder in his house. I can say that I've had that feeling, and I'm not making fun of the wind chimes. I've had a text message from an RCMP constable saying: there are people armed and dangerous; this is the truck they're driving; they're heading your way. Then you actually have to sit there with your wife, with your kids sleeping, and say: do you want to have a gun in the house? You actually have to go through that process in your head. Do you want to escalate something? And then there's that fear that you know you're the last line of defence to protect them. So I just wanted to say that that's a very real thing.

Also, as a rancher and a cattle producer there is nothing that hurts you worse than when maybe you're calving pretty hard and you go out in the morning and find that you're a little late. You've got calves on the ground, and their guts are spilled, their tails are eaten off, or maybe even worse, the cow can't get up, and you've watched a pack of coyotes work on her all night. It's not fun, as someone that cares about animal husbandry and livestock.

I remember when BSE hit in 2003. I'd just gotten out of college. Cattle were basically worthless. My grandfather had a fairly antique, as I would describe them, herd of cows at the time. Immediately the salvage market went out of cattle. You couldn't get rid of them. They were worth nothing. It cost you more to take them to town to get rid of them than you could sell them for. So between our province and Canada they came out with a pretty good plan, but it involved shooting the cows. I know that I had, you know, not the pleasure but the displeasure of having to shoot hundreds of cows between 2003 and 2005. I don't know how you would perform tasks like those without a useful gun that provides so much utility and safety for a rancher. I don't know what could replace that. I just wanted to add that.

I think this is a common-sense motion, and I'll enjoy supporting it. I'll cede my time.

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

Seeing none, I am prepared to recognize the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont if he's wishing to speak?

Is there anyone else? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, having already spoken to the motion, I'm not sure.

Mr. Bilous: Correct. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm requesting unanimous consent for one-minute bells for the duration of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: I'm prepared to call the question on Motion 41 unless there is anyone else wishing to speak. The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont. We've been down this road.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your recognizing me just for a couple of minutes. I just wanted to touch on why I support this motion, and I wanted to talk about my time in policing for 10 years. As a police officer I was never concerned about law-abiding gun owners; I was concerned about criminals.

I can tell you that in my time on patrol, in the latter half of it I came across guns more and more often, ones that were makeshift, ones that were put together from other parts, people who had them in their own vehicles and stolen cars. That was the concern. It was criminals having guns because they were willing to use them.

I wanted to share that for the federal government to try to ban handguns and move forward with that against law-abiding owners is the wrong way to go. What they need to do is strengthen the laws and the punishments for criminals who are using these firearms. If you're caught with a firearm, with the way the Charter of Rights is, you have done something else to get there. It's not that you can just search a person or search their home. You have to have committed a different crime, either displayed that gun, used it, or something else that gave power for a search to come across it. Why people would carry these in public, it's not necessary. Law-abiding gun owners should be respected.

One night I was coming down Gateway Boulevard, and a car came out of a motel. We got into a car chase. As it parked at a local apartment, I saw the guy take something off his chest. He gets out of the car and he's wearing a tactical vest with prohibited magazines fully loaded. He had a bandana. He had left a Kriss Vector assault rifle in the car. It was a close call for us. However, we managed the situation. But that person received a conditional sentence order, so no jail time, just a community order. Basically: don't do it again. This is the message that we're sending to people who are breaking these laws.

I think that what we need to focus on are punishments that are substantial enough to prevent those kinds of crimes from occurring. We shouldn't be going after law-abiding gun owners, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Is there anyone wishing to provide a brief question or comment?

Seeing none – I feel like we might have adamant agreement this afternoon – I'm prepared to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 41 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:07 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Sawhney
Allard	Lovely	Schow
Amery	Loyola	Schulz
Barnes	Luan	Sigurdson, R.J.
Bilous	McIver	Singh
Ceci	Neudorf	Smith
Dach	Nixon, Jason	Stephan
Dreeshen	Orr	Toews
Getson	Phillips	Turton
Glasgo	Rehn	Walker
Glubish	Rosin	Wilson

Gray Rutherford Yao
 Horner Savage

4:00

Totals: For – 38 Against – 0

[Government Motion 41 carried unanimously]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

The Chair: Hon. members, upon reviewing the committee's records this morning, it was noted that amendment A2 was not disposed of last evening. Accordingly, the committee will return to debate on that amendment, and additional copies of amendment A2 will be distributed to all members.

While they're being distributed, I think it's appropriate to ask: will there be any speakers on amendment A2? Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll read this into *Hansard* for the benefit of members who haven't received it yet. I'm moving this on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, that Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in section 13(2) by striking out "or government initiatives."

Really the purpose of this, Madam Chair, is quite simple. What this does is ensure that monies collected don't go into general revenues or some kind of slush fund but that it's used for initiatives, I believe, as the member was intending.

With that, I'll keep my comments short. I encourage members to support this amendment.

The Chair: All right. Just for clarity in *Hansard*, this amendment was moved on November 20 by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to amendment A2?

If not, I will call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We are now back on the main bill. Are there any speakers wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment that I'd like to move. I'll just wait.

The Chair: Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A4. St. Albert, please proceed.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, and to move the amendment. I move that Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019, be amended in section 4 by striking out subsections (2), (3), (5), (6), and (9) and in subsection (7) by striking out clauses (a), (b), (d), and (e).

I'd just like to say a couple of things before I get into some of the technical pieces about why this amendment is a good idea. First of all, as I had some time over the weekend to take some of the pieces of legislation that I hadn't had enough time to really go through

carefully, I took them home and sat down and read them. As I was reading through the sections that apply to AISH – of course, it is quite complex because you have to compare the legislation and try to figure out what it actually means and what the potential of these changes are. I actually had to read it a few times to be sure that I was understanding what I was reading, and it turns out that indeed I was. That is the danger. I just want to highlight that that is the danger or, I guess, less danger – but that is the risk of an omnibus piece of legislation that addresses so many different moving pieces, that it is quite easy to bury it, to bury changes that have the ability to impact people's lives. I'm going to talk about some of those changes.

I would like to remind members that I know they like to talk about platform commitments and who did what and who didn't do what, but I would like to say that I remember distinctly promises made by the UCP before the election, promises to preserve AISH benefits and to support and respect people with disabilities. I believe that the changes that are being proposed in this piece of legislation do exactly the opposite. I do believe that this amendment will attempt to undo some of the potential damage, some of the risk also, that this legislation poses to Albertans.

Now, let's be clear. Assured income for the severely handicapped – and again, I really do hate the name of this particular piece of legislation. It's old. It's not incredibly respectful, but that's what it's called. This piece of legislation – and the key word here is "legislation"; that is the law – protects certain things about AISH, which are benefits that are paid to people who are eligible under the criteria of severe handicap. They were put into law, really, if you want to boil it right down, so that we couldn't mess around with it, so that the law was there, the rules were there, eligibility was there. You could not make significant changes to this legislation without debating it in this very place. That's what democracy is, right? You propose an amendment. You propose significant legislative changes. This is the place that you do it. You don't do it in a minister's office. You don't do it in a boardroom. You don't do it behind closed doors. You do it here, particularly when it impacts so many people.

Let's just go through what some of these things do, some of the things that have been put into this piece of legislation. Section 1 of the AISH Act, which the government proposes to change, is amended in clause (b) by striking out "section 3.2" and replacing it with "the regulations." Let me tell you what section 1 is. Section 1 is the section about definitions, so it defines a client, which is another old, dated word, as "a recipient of a benefit who is eligible under section 3.2." That defines who is eligible for benefits. Basically, what this is doing, what this is proposing to do is to take the legislated definition, "severe handicap," and move that from the AISH Act to regulation.

Once again, we've heard over and over and over from this government: "We're not doing anything. We didn't cut AISH. We're not changing anything. Nothing to see here. Move along." Well, I would agree that this legislation doesn't do it yet, but it does open the door for some changes that are very significant. Then I would think about a phrase that I often think about when I look at some of these things: it's really not what you say; it's what you do. If you are moving these pieces out of legislation into regulation, I would ask just one question: why? What are you doing? Why are you doing this?

4:20

Here are some other changes: section 1 of the AISH Act is also amended by repealing clause (i). This is the one, again, under definitions. Section 1 defines severe handicap. This move in this piece of legislation completely removes the definition.

Section 3(1) is also amended by striking out “section 3.2” and replacing it with, once again, “the regulations” wherever it occurs. Section 3(1) is all about the benefits, the AISH benefits. This removes the definition of eligibility for benefits that include living allowance, child benefit, personal benefit, health benefit and also include cohabitating partner and dependent children of the person receiving AISH. You can imagine that by moving all of the things that were previously in this section from legislation into regulation – I’m going to ask the same question: why? What is the purpose of this? I am quite certain that the UCP list of things to change, tackle, repeal, and remove is quite long. Why exactly is AISH in your target?

Section 3.2 is repealed and moved to regulation. Section 3.2 defined eligibility for benefits and previously included age and residency, severe handicap – once again, the definition – income and assets of cohabitating partner. This moves eligibility for benefits out of the act into regulation.

Here’s another one. Section 3.3 is repealed and not replaced. Section 3.3 is about exempt assets of the person and cohabitating partner and previously included assets in trust, Henson trusts, and time to invest assets. Previously legislation allowed for approximately a year for somebody, let’s say, receiving an inheritance to make decisions about where to direct that. This moves exempt assets out of the act into regulation. Why?

Section 12(1) is also amended – this is about the scope – and moves to regulation.

Schedule 1, of course, is amended. We’ve all heard about that. These are CPI adjustments. That is indexing. For those of you that were not in the Legislature when we passed this legislation a while ago, it was a really great day, actually. I think that altogether everybody in this place at the time supported this. This was more than \$30 a month that people would get as an increase with, you know, tying it to inflation. This was about finally saying to the community, the disabled community, that you no longer have to beg for a raise every year. You no longer have to wait and hold your breath for a time the government of the day decides they’re doing well enough to give you a raise. This says: “You are respected. You are respected enough for us to commit these resources to invest in you and to invest in your family. We’ll do that every single year to lessen the poverty that you have to deal with just that little bit.”

You know, if you calculate, let’s say, a 40-hour work week for somebody on AISH, sadly, I think they’re earning under \$10 an hour. This is not a healthy benefit. I’ve heard the minister stand up a number of times, and I think her rationale for deindexing or cutting AISH has been: well, other provinces pay less. I don’t know. That’s just wrong. When you calculate that these AISH benefits pay the person less than \$10 an hour but your rationale is that other people in other provinces live in worse poverty, that’s wrong. That’s incredibly wrong.

Here’s another thing that really sort of worries me, schedule 2. Schedule 2 in the AISH Act is enormous. It’s massive. It really deals with a lot of the mechanics of benefits, how they’re determined, how they’re assigned. This omnibus bill, Bill 21 – and I think it’s a little bit weird, ensuring fiscal sustainability when you are cutting benefits for people with severe disabilities.

By repealing schedule 2 and not just amending – this legislation repeals it altogether. Schedule 2 is the determination of income, so basically this piece decides who gets AISH based on your income. This includes deductions from determinations: employment earnings, other earnings like child support – did you know that? – honoraria, death benefits. Death benefits used to be exempt from that calculation.

Money received for home repairs. We heard the Minister of Community and Social Services talk about investment in RAMP. It

used to be called the residential access and modification program. I’m not entirely sure if it’s still called that. The acronym is RAMP. There was a bit more money put into the RAMP program so that people could invest in their homes, stay in their home, age in place, deal with a disability, whether it was, you know, adaptations to your washroom or a ramp or whatever it was. People get money to do those things. Schedule 2 is now repealed, so that money for home repairs gets calculated.

Scholarships, bursaries, seniors’ benefit of your spouse: that now is gone. All of these things were included in schedule 2, but this piece of omnibus legislation has blown that up and moved it to regulation. That means that what once was protected in law is now moved to regulation, and we will not know what’s happening. We will not know. It will not be debated, and you will not be counted in this place. We will not have a chance to speak to those fundamental changes to a program that are essential to the survival and well-being of people with disabilities in this province. I’m not okay with that. I don’t know how you feel. I’m not okay with that. Now, it’s one thing to say – and the partisan politics aside, I don’t care which government it was. I don’t care which party. I don’t care who was the Premier. I don’t care. I think that it is reckless and irresponsible to take something that was once enshrined in law and move it to regulation.

Let me give you an example of the kinds of things that can happen when something is not protected by law. I’ll give you an example of how AISH works. Let’s say that you apply for AISH. You get all your documents in, and really the very important documents are the medical documents, the medical reports from your physician, from, let’s say, your therapist, from somebody qualified to do an assessment. Once the application package and those documents are received and reviewed by more than just an AISH generalist – these are the titles of the people that work in AISH. Once they are reviewed and are determined to be satisfactorily applied for – I’m not sure of the phrasing that they use. Once they stamp that – they decide the date that that information was received and approved – the process begins.

Then you go through the process of approval, and I think one of the saving graces was that even if it took a few months, even if it took six months because things were really bad and too many staff had been laid off – hint, you know, you’re laying off 223 people in CSS; I don’t think it’s going to get better – at the very least you knew that when you finally got through that, your benefits would be retroactive to that day that it was stamped. Yes, we got all the documentation in; good to go. That’s gone. None of us knew about it because it wasn’t protected in the law.

Now, you can talk about sustainability all you like, that you are only cutting benefits for those that apply or that are on AISH because you’re trying to protect something for the future. Focus on right now. These are real people living in real poverty, trying to raise families, trying to buy food. Real people. These are real people. This is not about a story for somebody who isn’t born yet who will likely need benefits. Who knows what that will be? This is about real people. I would say that if you’re going to talk about savings, it’s about \$10 million a year to index AISH benefits, and your war room is \$120 million over four years. This is about choices. This is about choices. You are making deliberate choices.

4:30

Now, I am not saying that everything will be repealed, changed, squashed, and thrown out. I am not saying that at all, but I’m saying: what are you doing? Why are you doing this? Actually, you can say one thing, but I’m looking at what you’re doing, and you’re doing this.

You're taking it from the law – and it's protected – and you're moving it to a place where we can't see what's happening, where Albertans can't see what's happening. It's hard enough for us to follow this, because it's very complex. Can you imagine somebody with a developmental disability trying to follow this, trying to understand what's happening? You represent them, too . . .

An Hon. Member: Address the chair.

The Chair: Hon. members, everything through the chair.
Hon. member, proceed.

Ms Renaud: . . . all of us, the collective you, the royal you.

One of the things that we learned in budget estimates – that was long, and I certainly appreciated all of the things that the minister agreed to follow up on in terms of information when we asked questions. I get that that's a lot to try to cover and answer, and I'm looking forward to those responses. One of the things that became crystal clear for me, Madam Chair, during estimates was what was going to happen next. Once again, one of the things that the minister was very clear on was that she couldn't answer a lot of the questions that were posed to her because – I get it – she's new to the position and it's a lot to take in. I cannot even imagine. One of the answers that kept going again and again was that we have to review things. I think it's really important for Albertans to understand, especially Albertans with disabilities and their families and their allies, that she said that this would be reviewed internally.

Now, that is a complete one-eighty from the way that we believed consultation for things like AISH, for supports for people with disabilities needed to happen. There is no way that any one of us can possibly understand what it is like to live with a disability unless we, in fact, live with a disability. The only way to be able to capture the voices and the needs or maybe the wishes or the ideas, the suggestions of people with disabilities is to include them in the decision-making. I'll tell you that you don't include people in decision-making after you've made the decision or after you have decided to cut something. They can't be a rubber stamp; they have to be included in this process. I would say that this government is not doing a very good job so far.

In estimates I asked some key questions, Madam Chair. I asked about AISH indexing. I have heard the government's reasons. I have heard them say that this is about money. I really don't buy that, because I see what you're spending on the war room. I have heard that these changes were made because of money and because, you know, what people want is sustainability.

My question was: who did you consult with? Before you deindexed AISH, which is a cut – let's be clear: semantics aside, deindexing AISH is a cut – you didn't consult with the disability advocate. That's his role. You didn't consult with the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. That's their job. I don't believe you consulted with any self-advocates. I don't really know who the government consulted with, so it would be quite lovely to get a list. If I'm wrong, I'd be thrilled to be proved wrong about this. If the disability community said, "Yeah, we can manage this; this isn't a problem; we can do this; we understand the big picture," that would be great, but that's not what I'm hearing, not one bit.

Madam Chair, the reason that I'm proposing this amendment – I would ask the members that are in the Chamber or that will consider this amendment to think about it. I don't believe that this piece of legislation immediately axes anything. What I do believe is that it opens the door for changes that will not be debated in the light of day in this place.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. member from . . .

Ms Gray: Edmonton-Mill Woods.

The Chair: Thank you. The wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm sure you've driven past us. As you head towards the Legislature, just on the right, when you're going up Calgary Trail, you're going right past Mill Woods for a bit.

Thank you. I appreciate being recognized in this debate, especially on amendment A4. I really just wanted to rise in this place to share that I would encourage all members to support this important amendment, brought forward by my colleague. I think that the remarks she's been making in favour of this amendment have been compelling. I certainly hope that all members of this House are hearing what the Member for St. Albert has been saying because I think it's really important to this debate about Bill 21. Although it is an omnibus bill, we need to be looking at, particularly, these important pieces that impact people's lives.

I appreciate the moment to stand briefly to speak in support of amendment A4, that we are currently debating. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members on amendment A4?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:36 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Irwin	Phillips
Ceci	Loyola	Renaud
Dach	Pancholi	Sabir
Gray		

4:40

Against the motion:

Allard	Luan	Schulz
Amery	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Barnes	Orr	Singh
Dreeshen	Rehn	Smith
Getson	Rosin	Stephan
Glasgo	Rutherford	Turton
Glubish	Savage	Walker
Guthrie	Sawhney	Wilson
Horner	Schow	Yao
Lovely		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 28
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: We are back on the bill.

Mrs. Savage: Madam Chair, I move to adjourn debate on Bill 21.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 26
Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019

The Chair: Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for . . . Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just think Nellie. Think Nellie, and it will come to you: Nellie McClung. I know there was a school in my constituency, and that was the name.

But I certainly have matters of serious concern that even Nellie McClung might have advocated about this afternoon when we speak of the Farm Freedom and Safety Act legislation that's before us. I wish to offer a few comments and suggest a few concerns and offer up a few questions to the minister on the piece of legislation.

Of course, as we know, Bill 26 amends the Labour Relations Code to exclude farm and ranch employees from the definition of employee. That exclusion effectively precludes these workers from forming or joining a trade union. This exclusion is actually contrary to section 20 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects workers' freedoms to engage in associational activity. I have great concern about that and about excluding any class of workers from the protection of the rights that are guaranteed under international conventions such as the universal declaration of human rights and our own Constitution.

I'm wondering if the minister has done any analysis or looked at a risk analysis as to how this bill might comply even with trade agreements such as CETA, if indeed that's a consideration that his ministry undertook when looking at crafting this legislation, this bill.

Also, Madam Chair, under the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between the EU and Canada, article 23.3, the right to freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are guaranteed. I'm wondering if an effective analysis and a legal analysis of that was done. Is the minister confident that this bill would hold up to legal scrutiny under analysis of their contravention, perhaps, of CETA agreements, the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between the EU and Canada?

Concerns abound about the actual constitutionality and legitimacy of the denial of workers' rights to organize. One of the justifications, Madam Chair, that the minister has offered in this House as to why they indeed failed to enshrine or maintain this right to organize for paid farm workers is the suggestion that he made earlier in this House, that many people had the opportunity but failed to exercise this right to organize during the period of time when our Bill 6, which gave them that right, had been in force.

Yet, Madam Chair, many rights exist which may not necessarily be exercised. For example, of course, as we know, he says that it wasn't exercised, but many people also did not vote or exercise their right to vote in the last election. No one that I've heard, on this side of the House or the other, would be advocating for those people to lose the right to vote. Simply because a right is not exercised is no justification to strip individuals of those rights, in particular in this case, where the right to organize and form a labour organization and union to protect one's worker rights is not a right that should be stripped simply because it may not have been exercised under certain circumstances by a certain class of workers. There well may be and, I would argue, there certainly are impediments to classes of farm workers who would have been allowed this right under Bill 6, impediments which would make it difficult for them to exercise those rights. It may well be, going forward, that those impediments would have made it difficult under any circumstances to exercise those rights.

However, as we know, the government has made the decision to go ahead and introduce legislation that will repeal the right for farm workers to actually earn at least a minimum wage. There's a loophole in this legislation which excludes the farm workers from being subject to certain rules and regulations that they had enjoyed before. The government has indicated that farms will no longer be subject to the detailed safety rules set out in the occupational health and safety code but, rather, will be simply subject to the rudimentary safety rights set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which would continue to apply.

At present, Madam Chair, farms and ranches with paid nonfamily employees must enrol their workers in the workers' compensation system, like virtually every other employer in every industry across Canada. Now, workers' compensation coverage provides wage loss, rehabilitation, and fatality benefits to workers. Workers' compensation also precludes workers from suing their employers if the worker is injured. Now, before 2015 such coverage was optional, and relatively few farms purchased it. Some farms purchased private injury insurance, and studies showed that those that did purchase such insurance found that relying on farmers to purchase private insurance left a significant number of farm workers uninsured or underinsured, and the private premiums were more expensive than workers' compensation premiums. Private insurance also left farmers open to civil suits where injuries or fatalities occurred.

So, Madam Chair, this isn't just simply reversing Bill 6; this is reversing hundreds of years of basic labour and human rights advances by removing core protection for workers.

We know that the vast majority of Alberta farmers care for their workers, particularly because we know that many of these workers who are on these farms, family farms, especially when we're talking about the small farm where there are five or fewer workers, are the community members, the neighbours, friends, sometimes even relatives of the farmer who employs them. Of course, we're not suggesting that there is no concern on the part of the farmers for the safety of their employees. However, that still doesn't mean that these workers don't have the basic right and shouldn't have the basic right to enjoy the protection of legal frameworks and legal minimum standards such as having a minimum wage standard of some kind. However, this legislation actually precludes that standard from being implemented because it effectively excludes them from the definition of employee and therefore doesn't give them the same protections they have enjoyed previously under the Labour Relations Code and employment standards regulations as well.

We're going backwards in a way that I don't even know if many farmers would really be in favour of, because they're looking at denying rights to people who they probably see in their community apart from their work on the farm. These, as I said, are their own community members and people who work in the area, perhaps not only for them but for other farmers. They're probably the last ones that farmers want to deny basic workers' rights to, yet this legislation does precisely that.

I think it's very, very disappointing to see that the government found it necessary to deny basic legal rights to paid farm workers in the province. It went much further than what they suggested they might do by simply repealing Bill 6. It goes even deeper into the well of taking away rights from workers. No other jurisdiction in North America exempts any class of workers from earning at least some type of minimum wage for their work. The Premier and his government are more than undoing Bill 6; he's taking Alberta back to preindustrial labour relations laws. We are very, very disappointed with the move by this Legislature, by the government,

to go backwards and basically attack and single out paid farm workers rather harshly and unnecessarily.

4:50

There's another class of these workers, Madam Chair, who are itinerant farm workers or workers who are temporary workers from afar, the least able to defend themselves. The government is well aware that whether they are foreign workers here on temporary contracts or whether they are local workers who are coming to work on farms, the likelihood of these workers being able to mount a challenge to enforce their rights and oppose the government's restrictions on their right to organize is pretty limited. It's very difficult to understand why the government wanted to go to this length to try to stifle the opportunity of a class of workers in this country to exercise legal rights that every other class of worker in the country has. Alberta will be more than an outlier; it'll be unique in North America, never mind Canada, in repealing the right of farm workers to organize and at least have a basic minimum wage and the ability to enshrine a basic minimum wage and have that backed up by legislation.

I think that Albertans should take a close look at what this legislation is doing and wonder aloud: who's next? That's a question that many Albertans may have in their own mind when they see this government targeting a specific group of workers who are very, very unable to really fight against this type of legislation. This government is stripping away legal rights that are enshrined in our Constitution, enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights, that are enshrined, perhaps, in the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between the EU and Canada, trade agreements in CETA, yet the government sees fit to strip away these rights.

It's not something that I think even farmers expected them to approach as far as the repeal of Bill 6. I think that many farmers will be surprised and perhaps a little shocked to see what loopholes have been left here so that workers on their farms don't end up enjoying rights that are globally and universally accepted as basic labour rights, that all workers should enjoy in a democratic society at the very least.

The question that will be one that I think is legitimate to wonder about is: who's next? What class of worker does this government want to chip away at? Will it be another sector of farm workers? Or perhaps it'll be wage labour elsewhere, where they think: "Well, these people haven't been on strike lately. They haven't had any labour action. They haven't exercised their right to form a union. Maybe we'll just take that right away from them as well." The beat goes on.

I think this government may be using this as a bit of a testing ground as well to see what kind of reaction we get from the labour movement and from Albertans in general. Dare I say, Madam Chair, that the reaction will be loud and clear that Albertans don't stand for basic labour rights being taken away from individuals, where we turn ourselves into a preindustrial-era jurisdiction. We respect the rights of people to organize.

This is 2019, not 1919. The Winnipeg General Strike happened 100 years ago, and the right of workers to organize, no matter what category of worker they happen to be, has been enshrined in our laws and our Constitution and the universal declaration of human rights and in other international treaties for decades and generations. This government is seeing fit to turn that clock back. I find it disheartening, shameful. I would hope that the government will see fit to perhaps alter these pieces of legislation or the parts of it, at least, where these loopholes exist to show that they actually do respect the rights of working people and that we follow the pattern of respect that's shown internationally and enshrined in law in many other pieces of legislation and international treaties.

With that, Madam Chair, I'll close my remarks and, of course, let it be known that I certainly don't support this bill in any way, shape, or form.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 26? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Edmonton-McClung: I really appreciate his, I guess, view of how things happen on farms and his view of how a consultation process took place. I am from a farm community. I did grow up on a farm. I did actually attend a few of these consultation items that we took.

I guess, just to set a pretext for that, the old farm act, the one that they had, Bill 6, that we're obviously pulling off the table: it was a platform commitment. It was something that was poor legislation. There were tons of folks that protested against it. That's all in the past, and that's all the history. But as far as folks in my area, how much they were onboard with that act: nobody knew who I was when I ran for election, and not too many people outside my area know who I am now, but at any of the farming events or any of the items where I run into folks in that industry, all I have to do is say, "I'm the guy who beat the former ag minister," and I'm getting drinks bought for me. People are jumping up and down and shaking my hand because it was probably the least representative member for that industry. Unless I run into some of the loggers and the folks in the forestry sector – well, then, it's kind of a split between who's fighting for buying me rounds.

What happened in my area when we actually went up to Mayerthorpe and we consulted with the folks: they came to the meeting. They brought all their concerns, the items that we're looking at in talking about the farm freedom act. Now, you had people that were farm workers. You had people that were from the industry. You had farmers themselves. You had folks that were sitting there. Honestly, I expected it to be a little more one-sided, but it was a pretty fulsome discussion. When you actually have them talking about – and this is the group – putting up offers and suggestions of how to actually train people, how to run the farm safer, how to make sure they have pause for, you know, working hours, conditions, everything else along those lines, this is true consultation. Now, I don't think that Mayerthorpe was unique in this. I strongly believe that this is kind of a groundswell, if you would.

Talking about farming practices 100 years ago or going down some other path – I hate to say it. You don't necessarily have to have a hammer and sickle over somebody to make them do the right thing. We're well beyond that now in this day and age. People do things the right way because it's the right thing to do, although it might be scary for some folks to not have it written down to the infinitesimal detail and to hold those people to that type of extent. They're going to do the right thing. I saw that first-hand, Madam Chair. I saw that first-hand when they were talking about the care and custody of their workers.

I have folks that are in the bee industry in my area. It's not just the honey producers; it's the folks that actually produce the bees themselves. They're looking for relaxation of a bunch of other laws because they can't find people here to actually help grow the bees. They're actually predominantly in Mexico. I have folks that are on tree farms that bring in folks from Mexico, as an example, bring them over here and work all these hours, the time and the money that goes into that and the care and custody from these people, because they know that every dollar they earn here has an order of magnitude effect back in those villages. These are folks that aren't even Albertans.

They're not exploiting them. They're helping them, bringing them here to give them lots of work, pay them decently, give them great accommodations because they know that the money that they earn here goes back to their villages. They can buy a farm tractor, and next thing you know they're producing more revenue in those areas. These are the same folks that are being painted with that brush, that would take advantage of those types of folks that work for them or people that are from the area that work for them. Quite frankly, it's wrong.

But the consultation that did take place was genuine and true. It holds to one of our platform items, and it really speaks volumes to what we're trying to do here. I won't go on for hours. Honestly, I'm in favour of it.

Some of the information that's coming from the members opposite is very skewed. It's not representative of the facts out in rural communities, nor is it representative of that strong farming industry. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to stand and address this bill in Committee of the Whole because I have a number of concerns. I've spent a great deal of time working with the farming and ranching community, talking about these issues, and I've heard a lot of what I've heard from the community reflected back in the debate on this bill.

5:00

There are a great number of farming and ranching families, employers, the AgCoalition that became AgSafe: strong voices for health and safety, strong support for making sure, whether they be family or paid, whether they be part-time and temporary or full-time, that all workers come home safely. I certainly know that from my own experience working with these communities, and we've heard that through the debate.

I am not supportive of this piece of legislation because despite what the member who rose before me just said, that all employers want to have those reasonable basic minimums and want to protect and provide for their employees, what this bill actually does is remove all minimum employment standards for all workers. The members in this House have said that to introduce the idea that there might be a worker who is exploited or there might be a worker who is underinsured or uninsured is to insult all farmers. I do not believe that that is an accurate characterization. No one accuses oil and gas of being bad employers because they have to follow occupational health and safety and that if they were good employers, then we wouldn't have OH and S, and they would just naturally do it all. That doesn't make sense, Madam Chair.

We have minimum employment standards, we have minimum workplace protections for a very deliberate reason. In fact, these minimum employment standards and marketplace protections exist for farm workers across this country, except soon not in Alberta. Alberta will be the only place where minimum standards like statutory holiday pay, hours of work, and minimum wage will not apply to vast swaths of workers in this particular industry. That is unusual. That is something that is removing rights and protections from a group of workers that in many cases are considered to be vulnerable workers, and it's something that is happening not because – I'll pause my thought there, Madam Chair.

Employment standards and those minimum basic protections are something that we recognize for the majority of workers in Alberta. Here in this bill not only do we remove those minimum standards of protection from farm workers, but we actually expand the

number of workers and industries where those minimum protections will not be than even before Bill 6 was originally introduced. That is of grave concern to me because we know that having those minimum employment standards there in many cases is required or is the minimum that many workers receive. That is my first comment around employment standards.

I would like to certainly commend the work that AgSafe and the producer groups are doing to raise awareness. I would say that in conversations with many of those producer groups I often had people talk to me about how we could expand the safety and the requirements to a larger number of workers in these industries.

We know that by exempting these workers from minimum employment standards, it puts Alberta out of line with other jurisdictions. Similarly, by removing that right, which is constitutionally protected, to be able to organize through the Labour Relations Code, that puts Alberta out of step not just with other jurisdictions but with the Constitution of Canada. That is something that has been argued and reaffirmed in a number of jurisdictions and in a number of ways, so putting us out of step. I would note that as the members have argued in their debate on this piece of legislation that no farms or ranches had used that constitutional right to collectively bargain since it was given to them, that very fact makes me question: then why are we taking it away? Why are we removing somebody's right when you've even reflected back that the workers have not been using it? There appears to me to be a bit of a logical disconnect there.

Now, on the topic of the WCB, the workers' compensation, we know from before Bill 6 that under the PC government there were a number of studies and reviews done that showed a great number of farm workers were either uninsured or underinsured and not being covered through private insurance.

With the requirement of WCB, we've seen that there have been a number of claims, lost-time claims and injury claims, over the past few years while WCB coverage has been in place: in 2018, 886 claims against WCB. When I see those numbers, when I see that there are 371 lost-time claims, the way I reflect on those numbers is that those are all people who received rehabilitation or compensation for a workplace injury. These are all workers and employers who were supported to make sure that when an incident happened, everyone was supported, given treatment if necessary, given physiotherapy if necessary, and then helped to get back to work.

This is not just about the workers. This is also about the employers because, of course, through WCB that coverage means that an employer cannot be sued. This is the important historical bargain of the workers' compensation system. We know through the review of the WCB system how highly valued WCB coverage is by both employers and employees. When the system works well, it works incredibly well. It's a system that continually needs to be updated. Of course, we had completed the first review of the WCB system in 15 years. It's a system that continually needs to be updated.

I would note, just talking about how long since reviews, that on the employment standards side our review and changes to employment standards to bring Alberta in line with the rest of Canada around things like making sure that there was protected leave when someone has a sick child and some of the other changes that were made was the first major review of employment standards in 30 years. So Alberta had employment standards that were significantly out of date.

What this bill does is essentially return to an employment standards regime of 30 years ago in some cases, if at all, because I've seen estimates that roughly 80 per cent of workers will not qualify for those minimum employment standards. I will repeat

again that we know that the majority of employers are good employers. This is the case for all industries. We do not create employment legislation for the good actors; we do that to make sure that everyone has that same minimum standard of protection for farm workers or for other industries. That's why employment standards are applied so universally.

I would note that Alberta does have a number of exemptions to employment standards in other industries that should be reviewed. In fact, that work had begun under our government, and I hope that the minister of labour will continue to do the consultations that need to continue.

Now, when Bill 6 was originally introduced, absolutely huge concerns were raised. We then spent the next two years working very closely with farming and ranching communities, working with the AgCoalition, that then kind of turned into or helped to form AgSafe, listening very carefully and working with the farming and ranching community to try and find the right balance in implementation. I think everyone recognizes that this is an industry and a sector where there is a high level of risk. We know that agriculture and forestry continue to see the highest fatality rates among any major sector. In Alberta we have a lot of industrial sectors, but in agriculture and forestry is where we see the highest number of deaths and a high number of injuries.

5:10

One of the reasons why I think it's important that all workers have reasonable compensation and coverage is because not only does that impact them, but it impacts families. The impact on families, when there isn't adequate compensation and rehabilitation, can be quite devastating, particularly because asking injured workers to use the court system to get compensation becomes a very lengthy thing, and it becomes a barrier for many who don't have the financial means to implement that.

In my response to Bill 26 I really want to highlight that removing minimum employment standards, removing minimum hours of work, minimum wage, stat holiday pay, all of those factors, from employment standards for a huge swath of workers in this industry I think is a big step backwards. Having private insurance which will be defined by regulation: I think we are at risk that there could be workers who are underinsured. I'm concerned about the implementation of copayment when we know that there are now, potentially, no minimum wages set in this sector for a large number of the workers in this industry.

Those are some strong concerns that I have with this bill. Absolutely, it is a fact that repealing Bill 6 was part of the UCP platform, but I would note that Bill 26 does more than just repeal Bill 6. In fact, it includes even more exempted workers in new industries that were not previously there. One thing that we've been able to do since farming and ranching was brought in under WCB is improve the data tracking to know what the injury rates are looking like, the types of injuries, because that information can be used with good partner organizations like AgSafe to continue to improve safety standards and education and to improve getting the information out there. Of course, nobody wants injuries. Everybody wants to see workers come home safely at the end of the day. Sometimes to make sure that that happens, having good information is key, so continuing to do that is really important.

One thing Bill 26 doesn't do but was done in Budget 2019 is continue to fund AgSafe and continue to help those producers. I think it was 29 producer groups that created AgSafe. It's not part of this bill, but I would really hope to see this government continue to support the important work that is happening through that organization. It was originally started with grants from government to help the organization begin, and it continues to receive funding

now. I would suggest that that needs to continue happening, and that's a major part of continuing to improve health and safety and get that programming out to all who are interested in it. I know a lot of farming and ranching families and employers have worked with AgSafe to improve practices, and I think that's really commendable.

I suppose to summarize my concerns with this bill, removing minimum employment standards, which at this point I have not heard the government address – it was raised in question period today, Madam Chair, but again I did not hear that addressed. Removing those minimum employment standards is a huge concern for me. I'll repeat that it's estimated that as high as 80 per cent of workers in the farming and ranching area could find themselves exempted from minimum employment standards. The Labour Relations Code changes essentially preventing a group of workers from a constitutionally protected right to collectively bargain: I'll note again that that right was not exercised in the past few years, so the reason for removing this I have to question. If I'm not mistaken, it wasn't even mentioned that this was being removed in the government press releases on this, so a change that's been put there.

The potential for people to be completely uninsured and the damaging impacts that injury or fatality can have when that is the case – even more of a risk is being underinsured. I think there is a very big difference between the WCB, which has been an organization set up specifically and redirected even recently to make sure that there is a workercentric focus, a real focus on supporting workers and employers and getting back to work, versus a private insurance company. Private insurance companies often have a focus on making sure that the claims costs are minimized where they can be versus the WCB, where there is an entire system set up to deal with rehabilitation.

So these are my concerns. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 26 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 26 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:16 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Aheer	Lovely	Schulz
Allard	Luan	Sigurdson, R.J.
Amery	Neudorf	Singh
Barnes	Orr	Smith
Dreeshen	Rehn	Stephan
Getson	Rosin	Turton
Glubish	Rutherford	Walker
Guthrie	Savage	Wilson
Horner	Sawhney	Yao
Jones	Schow	

5:20

Against:

Bilous	Gray	Pancholi
Ceci	Irwin	Phillips
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Totals:	For – 29	Against – 9

[Request to report Bill 26 carried]

Bill 28**Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act**

The Chair: Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today in support of Bill 28, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. As many of the members in this House would know, the contents of this bill, which are essentially to allow for the government to seek, through legal action, recovery from opioid producers damages that have contributed, of course, significantly to the opioid crisis in Alberta. This notion of actually seeking legal action against opioid producers was actually part of the NDP's platform commitment. This was part of our campaign commitment and part of our election platform, so I do commend the government for seeing that great idea and implementing it because it does show that they are able to recognize some good ideas when they see them. I appreciate that they are bringing this forward as this is something that we, of course, strongly support.

I don't think there is an Albertan here who has not been somehow affected or knows somebody who has been affected by the opioid crisis in this province. I can tell you myself that I certainly know people in my life who have been affected and have loved ones who have been affected. As well, I did a significant amount of work in my previous life prior to being elected with school boards who are trying to do education with their students and their schools and trying to really get a handle on this even before – they seem to identify that crisis quite early on because we know that it disproportionately affects young people. We know that there have been so many lives that have been lost and that have been affected by this crisis. Certainly, we should be taking all measures we can to tackle this crisis on behalf of all Albertans.

I am disheartened by the government's lack of support for supervised consumption sites because we know how they absolutely, one hundred per cent save lives. We know also that supervised consumption sites are part of a strategy. It is certainly not that any government has ever suggested that it is the sole way to approach and to tackle this problem. It is one critical piece to saving the lives of those individuals and then working towards treatment and recovery and education, but certainly there are many facets to this crisis that need to be addressed, and I maintain and would like to put on the record, as I don't think I've had the opportunity to do so yet, that I strongly support supervised consumption sites as one of those key strategies to address this crisis.

Certainly, what is being brought forward today within Bill 28 is another measure that I support. Although we know that seeking legal action is not a certainty, we know that it is a costly and long-term strategy. We've seen it taken by governments against tobacco manufacturers, automobile manufacturers in the past. We know that specifically with respect to opioids we've seen that there has actually been some success in other jurisdictions. I'm thinking about legal actions that have been taken in the U.S. We know that a number of states have taken legal action against these producers

because they should be held accountable. They should be held accountable for the product that they've produced and the damage that has been wreaked as a result of their product, and I certainly support taking those legal measures.

But it is not a certainty. It is an admirable measure. It should be part of, again, as I mentioned, a comprehensive strategy, but I think the other thing that we need to look at is that if we are going to be pursuing this bill, which I will be supporting, we do need to make sure that we are also thinking about, hopefully, the outcome if we are successful as a province in actually recovering some costs from the producers of opioids. In particular, I think what is of interest and should be of interest for all Albertans is that if we do recover these costs, any recovery should actually go back into our system to support mental health and addictions services.

To that end, Madam Chair, I am tabling a proposed amendment to this bill. I'll just wait a moment for the amendment to be received and distributed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms Pancholi: Madam Chair, would you like me to read the amendment?

The Chair: Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1. Please proceed.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll take a moment. I know it's currently being distributed to the members. It is a bit of a lengthy amendment. I do want to read it into the record, however. It is important because it speaks to the objectives of the amendment, and it speaks specifically to the situation and circumstance in the event that the government of Alberta, on behalf of its citizens, is able to recover some costs from opioid producers as a result of legal action. It speaks to what Albertans believe should be done with those funds that are recovered.

To that end, amendment A1 moves – actually, I should indicate that I'm moving this amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning. My apologies; I should have clarified that at the beginning. The amendment is to move that Bill 28, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, be amended as follows: (a) section 1(1) is amended by adding the following after clause (g):

(g.1) "Minister" means the Minister determined under section 16 of the Government Organization Act as the Minister responsible for this Act;

and – this is the key clause – subsection (b) the following is added after section 14:

Review by committee of the Assembly

14.1(1) A special committee of the Legislative Assembly must, within 6 months after the day on which this Act comes into force and in accordance with subsection (3), begin a review of the matters set out in subsection (2).

(2) The special committee must consider each of the following for the purpose of the review under subsection (1):

- (a) whether the expenditure of monies recovered by the Crown in an action brought under section 2(1) should be restricted to specified purposes,
- (b) if the special committee determines that expenditures should be restricted, specifying the purposes for which expenditures should be permitted,
- (c) whether a separate fund should be established into which the money referred to in clause (a) must be deposited, and
- (d) any other matter that the special committee considers necessary and relevant to the matters set out in clauses (a) to (c).

(3) Subject to subsection (4), the special committee must, within 6 months of the day on which the special committee commenced its review in accordance with subsection (1), submit a report to the Legislative Assembly that sets out its recommendations in respect of the matters considered under subsection (2).

(4) If the Legislative Assembly is not sitting at the time of the completion of the special committee's report under subsection (3), the special committee must submit the report referred to in that subsection within 15 days after the day on which the Legislative Assembly commences its next sitting.

(5) Subject to subsection (6), the Minister must, within 30 days of the submission of the special committee's report under subsection (3) or (4), as the case may be, submit a report to the Legislative Assembly that specifies the recommendations set out in the special committee's report of which the Minister approves.

(6) If the Legislative Assembly is not sitting at the time of the completion of the Minister's report under subsection (5), the Minister must submit the report referred to in that subsection within 15 days after the day on which the Legislative Assembly commences its next sitting.

(7) The Minister must, on a quarterly calendar basis that commences on the day on which the Minister provided their report under subsection (5) or (6), as the case may be, provide a report to the Legislative Assembly in respect of all approved recommendations that have not been implemented.

My apologies; I appreciate that's a long amendment.

However, the point of this amendment is simply to state – it is not to delay the proclamation or passing of Bill 28 should it be passed by the Assembly – that within six months of proclamation of the act, the matter would be reviewed by a special committee to consider whether or not to set aside, to restrict any funds that are recovered to be specified for a specific purpose, basically saying that with any dollars that are recovered as a result of legal action, this special committee will consider and consult with Albertans about whether or not they want those funds to be dedicated to a specific purpose.

5:30

In particular – and I don't want to presuppose what this committee would find as a result of its consultations – we would expect, I believe, as the purpose of this is to recover funds related to the opioid crisis in this province, that those funds would be used specifically for, potentially, mental health and addiction services. Again, that would be a matter that would be under consideration by the special committee, to determine how the funds that are collected as a result of legal action would be used.

Again, part of the reason why we are seeking legal action is to recognize that there have been significant damages suffered by Albertans, specifically and individually by Albertans and Albertan families, but also as a society, as a community, as a government we have incurred significant costs to deal with the opioid crisis in this province. We're not unique to this; this is certainly a situation that's taken place in all provinces. But we have incurred a significant number of costs to provide treatment, to provide recovery, to provide supervised consumption sites, education, naloxone kits, all of those things that we've had to do. The strain on our health system as a result and the loss of lives, the loss of those individuals and those Albertans who are contributing to our society: in the crudest sense, it's actually dollars and cents, but more than that, of course, it's the damage that it's wreaked on our communities and our individuals and our families.

But there's actually been a cost associated with that as well. If we have incurred these costs and a court is to find, which we hope they would, that the opioid producers share some responsibility and liability for those costs, then that money should go back into paying

for some of the services and investing in dealing with the crisis that they created. I think that that is actually something that the government should support, because I believe that that's the intent behind taking such action, in order to actually hold those responsible who should be held responsible for the costs that have been incurred and to invest those costs back into treating and supporting Albertans and supporting Alberta communities and families and individuals.

This is intended to say: look, we know why that money and those costs have been incurred, and let's make sure those funds are being put back into mental health and addiction services. We know that the government has repeatedly stood up and, of course, said that we are in a dire fiscal situation. Any money that is recovered should go to actually, then, supporting the treatment and addiction services and all of the important work that's required to get a handle on and to eradicate the opioid crisis in this province.

Hopefully, the government will see this as a friendly amendment. I've already indicated that I support this bill, and this is not intended in any way to delay or to avoid the proclamation or passage of this bill but only to say that once proclaimed, once passed, a special committee will be set up to have this discussion, to have the discussion with Albertans about how any funds recovered through legal action should be spent, where they believe is the best place and the best investment in these services, and to provide recommendations. That is simply what the objective of this amendment is. It's intended to really focus the proceeds that may come from any legal action towards real, beneficial effects on this issue and to let Albertans decide what they believe is the best use of those dollars.

Again, I highlight that I am hopeful that government members will see this as a positive and friendly amendment to simply improve upon what we believe is already a good and important bill and to really thoughtfully think about how Albertans should have input as they are the ones that have been so affected and have borne the costs and the weight of this crisis on this province.

I do hope that the government members will seriously consider supporting this amendment and see it as a way to simply make this bill that much better, but it is a bill that we already support. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't want to speak too long, but I do just want to get on the record here. I very much appreciate some aspects of this bill, Bill 28, but I believe the amendment introduced by my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Whitemud on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning is an important one, and I say this from a place of seeing the opioid crisis on a daily basis. I don't know if I want to say that I have the honour, but I have three of the four safe consumption sites in Edmonton within my riding, and why I'm so proud to see them in action is because they have saved so many lives. Safe consumption sites have been an incredible addition to the neighbourhoods that I represent.

I just want to get on the record to talk about the fact that we know that the opioid crisis is so intimately connected to issues around mental health. One of the reasons why I think it's so important that we support this friendly amendment is that we know there is much more investment needed in combatting both mental health and addictions. I think that if we can have the funds dedicated specifically to addressing that, we'll really be able to be using those monies in an appropriate way.

You know, we've talked about mental health in this Chamber multiple times. We know that there have been some members,

including the Health minister, who've sort of rejected the idea that there is a mental health crisis in youth. There absolutely is, and the numbers prove that. I want the members opposite to really consider the importance of those investments. I know they've said that they've made some investments in Calgary, for instance, but we know that the CAMH centre here in Edmonton is delayed, and we know that serious investments are needed.

I want to point out that the evidence around harm reduction is clear. I was proud of the investments that our government made in addressing mental health and addictions as well. But I do worry that if this amendment is not accepted by the members opposite, we're losing a really important revenue stream that should absolutely be reinvested. Okay?

With that, like I said, I won't speak too long, but, you know, the evidence is clear. We've got an opportunity to use those funds in a way that will absolutely go back to those people who need the funds the most, right?

On training, it's interesting that the member talked about naloxone kits. I mean, again, I've seen the power of those first-hand. Actually, my staff and I took naloxone training not long ago. We talked to some of the front-line workers with Streetworks, who are there every day on the front lines reversing the effects of overdose. It's incredible how effective that is. Again, if we can be using the funds from these lawsuits directly into programs like theirs, the entire community, not just those within my neighbourhoods but the entire community, and the entire province will benefit. We should point out that while safe consumption sites are, you know, predominantly concentrated in the core parts of Edmonton – like I said, three within my riding – we know that there's a need elsewhere. We know that in suburban parts of the city, for instance, the opioid crisis is very much an issue.

Again, I just wanted to put that on the record. I urge the members opposite to think really carefully about this amendment and to think about accepting it, because, truly, it will benefit the entire province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, want to get on the record to say that I support not only the amendment but the original motion, I think, that's before us. Alberta joining B.C. in regard to trying to sue for damages to Albertans is an important thing to do, not unlike car manufacturer and tobacco company suits that have been successful in other parts of North America and the world.

We, of course, have a crisis with regard to opioid use in this province. Indeed, all of Canada does, some places more drastically and tragic effects in other places. But I can tell you that in the home community that I come from, Calgary-*Buffalo*, there are issues that would be improved if there were recoveries from the companies that make opioids that have impacted people in Calgary-*Buffalo*.

5:40

I do want to also point out, you know, that with any monies that come as a result – and it would be years off, likely – dedicating these monies to this issue in particular would be the best thing that could happen for Albertans, not only addicted Albertans and those with addiction and mental health issues but Albertans who are related to or connected with or know people who are negatively impacted by opioid use.

Madam Chair, this goes back many years. I mentioned earlier that I was a social worker in my earlier career. I haven't thought about him in a long time, but I can remember one gentleman who had a horrible work accident in a vehicle he was driving. He had a brain injury as a result of it and was in constant pain. Of course, he went

to many doctors to try and find pain relief and likely ended up breaking the law with numerous prescriptions for oxycodone hydrochloride and other drugs that would take away some of that pain that he was feeling as a result of the massive brain injury that he had suffered. He and his family suffered incredibly because of his inability to work, his inability to have relief from the pain he was in, and it affected them all.

I was just thinking that if in years to come there is a similar and a successful suit here with payments to people like that in Alberta who are so horribly impacted by the addiction to drugs they're on, they could perhaps find support and treatment that would be more successful than what he was doing. Of course, fast-forward from that to the present day, and I'm incredibly proud to be the MLA for Calgary-*Buffalo*. There is a supervised consumption site in the Sheldon M. Chumir health centre, the urgent care centre there. It does great work to ensure that people who go there under supervision and use injectable drugs are safe. It has not had any deaths on-site.

It's not the only thing that's going on in Calgary-*Buffalo*. There, of course, is counselling going on, there is residential care going on for people who have addictions. There's a whole range of treatment available to people in Calgary-*Buffalo* and throughout Calgary. Certainly, there needs to be more, and I've heard the associate minister talk about the spectrum of addictions and mental health services that need to be present. I could see that if there were funds received from this suit that we will be joining with B.C., those funds dedicated for filling out that spectrum of care would be a really important thing, starting from education, awareness, treatment, residential support, all the way through to medical support and supervised consumption support for those people who aren't quite ready to move into longer term relief of that addiction they're in in some other fashion.

I certainly think that if you read through the amendment, it makes a great deal of sense. Thank you to my colleague for bringing it forward. This kind of reserve, dedicating these funds for this purpose, is, I think, something all Albertans can get behind: seeing good money spent, in terms of a lawsuit, if it's dedicated to addressing the reason they're involved in the lawsuit. I, of course, just want to get on the record again that supervised consumption is an important part of the necessary spectrum of services, and I support that.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's certainly a breath of fresh air in this House that we have the opposition joining the government in supporting our bill. I certainly prefer that kind of momentum, when we stand together for Albertans and fight with the ones that took advantage of our vulnerable citizens. Certainly, our voice will be stronger. So credit to you guys, and thank you for that.

Regarding this amendment let me tell you this. When the Minister of Health introduced the bill, he spoke very clearly that it is our intention to keep the money within the health care system when we get it. When I stood up to introduce second reading on this, I reinforced that message. We're doing this anyway, so in the spirit of red tape reduction we don't need another lengthy procedure, another committee to do this. Unfortunately, I wouldn't recommend we consider this amendment, but thank you for the spirit of supporting the bill. Let's get down to the bill and get it over with.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:47 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Gray	Pancholi
Ceci	Irwin	Phillips
Dach	Loyola	Sabir

5:50

Against the motion:

Allard	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Amery	Orr	Singh
Getson	Rehn	Smith
Glubish	Rosin	Stephan
Guthrie	Rutherford	Turton
Horner	Savage	Walker
Jones	Sawhney	Wilson
Lovely	Schow	Yao
Luan	Schulz	

Totals: For – 9 Against – 26

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Are there any more speakers to the bill?
Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 28 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Mrs. Savage: Madam Chair, pursuant to Government Motion 31 I wish to advise that there shall be no evening sitting tonight, so I move that the Assembly – I rise to read to report and then adjourn. I'm so excited about adjourning.

The Chair: All right. Just to confirm, we are going to rise and report on Bill 26 and Bill 28 and rise and report progress on Bill 21.

Mrs. Savage: Yes. Exactly.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 26, Bill 28. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So carried.
The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: The motion I was excited for. Pursuant to Government Motion 31 I wish to advise that there shall be no evening sitting tonight, so I move that the Assembly adjourn until tomorrow, November 28, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:53 p.m.]

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