



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, December 3, 2019

Day 51

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

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 3, 2019

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, please be seated.

Bill 21 Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

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

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up and speak about the vitamin C showers and the champagne bars and luxury hotels.

An Hon. Member: It was champagne baths.

Member Loyola: Well, you know, I mean, technically, if you wanted to, you could take the champagne, put it in the bathtub, and you can have yourself a champagne bath, now, couldn't you? Who knows what it is that the Premier's staff is doing while he's there in London. We don't know, right? We don't know.

The Chair: Hon. member, as much as I enjoy vitamin C showers, I suspect we're going to get to the bill quite quickly.

Member Loyola: Yes. Most definitely. See, I love to talk about the exorbitant expenditures that this Premier and the Premier's staff indulge in while specifically asking Albertans to sacrifice so that we can, how they put it in this bill, ensure fiscal sustainability for the province of Alberta.

Now, it's surprising. So many times you have members on the other side speak about these kinds of exorbitant luxury costs and say: "Oh, no, no, no. That's not the case. We need to be fiscally responsible. We need to watch our spending." Yet here we have the Premier hopping on a jet with his friends, no less, from a pancake breakfast over to another municipality on a private jet. On a private jet. Now, it would be one thing if maybe they flew economy class. You know, I like to fly economy class. It's a little tight.

I remember that there was this one time where I got bumped up to business, and wow. That was luxurious. So I can't even imagine what it was like for the Premier to get on his private jet with his friends and just have a good old time as they were flying from this pancake breakfast. It must have been luxurious. It must have been really luxurious. At the same time, this Premier and this cabinet are asking all of us to approve a bill that's going to make the most vulnerable people here in the province of Alberta pay and make sacrifices. See, this is what we constantly get – this is what we constantly get – with Conservative governments, putting in place these kinds of budgets.

You know, austerity budgets let the people pay, yet those who are living high on the hog – there are those who even in this province say: "You know what? I don't mind. Let's have a progressive tax. I don't mind paying a little bit more because I happen to make a little bit more." These same Albertans that have a conscience say: "Hey, I don't mind paying just a little bit more so that I can help out my brother Albertan, my sister Albertan, my friend Albertan." I want to make sure that I'm gender inclusive – right? – Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. This is what I find just

incredibly problematic with these austerity budgets, that not everybody has to make the sacrifices. Why?

Now, I get it. I get it. You know, like, our friends on the conservative side that like to implement these austerity budgets: they often point to bad apples, bad people, and say: "Oh, look at them. They're taking advantage of the system." We hear an awful lot of rhetoric, maybe not from the members inside this House but from conservatives that speak ill even of people who are on AISH. I'm sure that some of the people in this House have heard the judgments that are made about people who live on AISH: "They're living off the system. Why don't they just get a job?"

Mr. Jason Nixon: Oh, shame on you.

Member Loyola: No. That's what I hear from conservatives that actually come to my office. That's what I hear from people who propose to support the UCP: why can't these people just get a job? Well, it happens to be that they're severely handicapped. That's why they can't work. Now, I'm not saying that the members of this House are saying that. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that this is a common judgment out there that we need to put an end to.

Now, someone who's living on AISH has to make the decision at the beginning of the month how much they are going to allocate. When you talk about budget, you can best be assured that for people who are living on AISH, they know what it's like to live on a budget. They know what it's like to have to make sure that each and every penny is accounted for, because they know, when it comes to the end of the month, it's going to mean paying the telephone bill or buying groceries or, you know, buying those extra dozen eggs at the end of the month. It's like that, things that perhaps we don't really have to be that concerned about here in this House, as members of this House. Perhaps we're not pinching pennies as much as the people who are on AISH are.

But this is a serious concern, and this is why I continually bring it up in this House, that all the members of this House should be really considering when it comes to this austerity budget that you want to put forward: who are you asking to make the sacrifices? People on AISH. We're also asking our fine seniors to make cuts. We learned today that more cuts are coming for seniors when it comes to – what was it again? Help me out here. It was the insurance. They need to take the exam to be insured so that they can get their driver's licence. That's once every two years after 75, and then after 80 it's once every year. This government is going to cut funding specifically so that those seniors – and this is something that the Alberta government requires of them. Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't. Yes, we need to make sure that our seniors that are driving are driving safe, but give them a hand. You're asking them to do this. You're asking them to comply with this. Help them out. Why are you taking funding away from this important necessity for seniors that want to be able to drive around the city?

You know, my mom – she'd probably kill me if I referred to her as a senior, but she is – is 75. But you know what? She's 75, and she acts like a 45-year-old. She's always keeping herself busy. You know, I have not seen another person that has dedicated so much of their time and effort to renovation projects of her apartment condo like my mom. She just loves keeping busy, but she's a senior and she's on a fixed income. Instead of this government making life better for seniors all around, they're taking money out of their pockets.

7:40

We've got this austerity budget. We're asking the most vulnerable in our society to make the sacrifices for this austerity budget. At the same time, we have a Premier that has decided to

give away \$4.7 billion as a way to be able to draw investment to this province, but we have yet to see one new job from this failed economic policy. I say “failed” because it’s been tried in so many other jurisdictions across North America. We don’t see it working. Then we’ve got to ask the members from the other side: “If you see that it doesn’t work in other jurisdictions, why is it that you are so adamant in applying it here in the province of Alberta? Why are you so adamant about doing it?”

You’ve got an austerity budget that’s asking the seniors and those on AISH, the most vulnerable, to sacrifice in order to meet the demands of this austerity budget so that we can pay off the debt, and we’re giving away \$4.7 billion to corporations that are actually taking the money and running. They’re going and investing it in other jurisdictions across North America. But the Premier sees fit to jump on a private jet with his friends and go have a good old time, right? Not only that, but we see an employee directly related to the Premier’s office going to London a number of times and staying in a luxury hotel. It was, like, \$16,000 a trip, I believe.

It’s important, then, that we ask ourselves, because you can’t be asking the most vulnerable in society to make the sacrifices if you yourself aren’t willing to lead by example. Lead by example. If you’re going to continue to live in the lap of luxury while implementing an austerity budget but then ask the most vulnerable people in our society to pay for it, what does that say? What does that say? I’m asking the members on the other side to please, please, please consider what it is that you are doing by voting in favour of Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. You know what? Members, my friends from the UCP, I agree that we need to be sustainable. We need to be responsible. But don’t ask the most vulnerable in our society to pay for it. Don’t ask the most vulnerable in our society to pay for it. This is the reality that we need to be asking ourselves right now.

Now, there were cuts to lodge funding, the deindexing of benefits. But you know what? I don’t want to get too judgmental. Okay. I’m going to put it this way. The one that I feel is probably the most heartbreaking is kicking dependants off the seniors’ drug plan. That is heartbreaking. Seniors, who have dedicated their lives to making Alberta a great place: you’re going to kick them off this drug plan because you’re trying to meet the demands of paying off this debt. I’d say: “Hey, reverse that one. Reverse that. Reverse the deindexing of benefits. Reverse kicking dependants off the seniors’ drug plan.” I’m sure that many of you have mothers and fathers, seniors in your life, and you know how dependent they have become on new drugs as they’re growing older and older. We all know that seniors are living longer and longer, and they require medication. That’s why I say that this one is the most heartbreaking.

I see some of the members on the other side shaking their heads. It’s heartbreaking that you’re asking seniors to make this particular sacrifice. I’m just asking the members on the other side to please consider what it is that they’re proposing by bringing in Bill 21, this so-called Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act.

One of the other things that I find particularly troubling as well is keeping fine money from municipalities and the fact that, from a government who said that they were going to increase funding for policing, here we are debating a way to open the back door to the cuts. Municipalities all across the province are going to have to figure out how to deal with the cuts that this government is now putting in place, much the same as is happening with education.

I know that there are a lot of members from the other side, representing the UCP here in this House, that represent rural communities. I’m interested in knowing what the constituents of these rural communities are saying to you when it comes to Bill 21. I’d love to hear from members on the other side about what their

constituents are saying regarding this, right? It’s interesting that so many from rural communities voted for the UCP, and now those same people that voted for the UCP are going to have to pay for it because money is being kept from municipalities. Municipalities have no other choice than to increase property tax on those same people, so they’re going to have to pay for the same services that they had in the past.

See, this is the thing. Yes, we do want to ensure fiscal sustainability, but who are the people that we’re asking to sacrifice?. That is the question. Why can’t we figure out a way where the most vulnerable Albertans are not the ones that are going to have to make the sacrifices that you’re asking them to make here in Bill 21, Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act. Now, I’ve talked before about postsecondary students and how much they’re going to have to pay. Student loans are going to end up costing them more in interest. People are going to have to pay higher electricity bills. I’ve already talked about the hardship for seniors, those on AISH.

The one that I can’t really understand is the attack on doctors, why this is something that you’d roll into this omnibus piece of legislation. I get it. You’re trying to negotiate. But this whole thing on doctor practitioner IDs: I mean, it’s been tried in other jurisdictions.

7:50

The Chair: Hon. members, I see the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Good to see you this evening, and thank you for an opportunity to respond on behalf of the government caucus in regard to that bizarre speech that we just heard. I have to say that I have some concerns. It may come as a surprise to you that I disagree with, well, everything that that hon. member just said.

The problem that we see with the NDP – and I spoke about this in question period yesterday – is that the NDP continue to misrepresent facts to Albertans, continue to mislead the province about what is actually taking place with the hon. Finance minister’s budget. They continue to say things that are just not factual, Madam Chair. A great example of it in this session, of course, was during question period, when the Official Opposition said to the minister of culture that she had spent \$35,000 on booze, that her office had spent \$35,000 on alcohol. At the time I got up, you may recall, and I said that they had jumped the shark. I knew for sure that the minister of culture had not spent \$35,000 on liquor inside her ministerial office. I’d known her a long time. It didn’t make any sense at all. I already knew that that, in fact, was not factual. It turns out that it wasn’t factual. It turns out that it was for a museum, that has a restaurant. And it turns out that the supplier, despite implications from the NDP to the opposite, was actually somebody that was used when the NDP were in government.

There are lots of examples like that, and there are lots of examples of that right in the hon. member’s speech. For example, health care funding is being cut. The hon. member spent a considerable amount of time – I don’t know if my colleagues noticed this – saying that health care spending is going to be cut in our province. Now, Madam Chair, as pointed out by the Premier – and the hon. member knows this because I know that he’s looked at the budget – health care spending, in fact, is at the highest that it has ever been in the history of our province. It has not been cut. In fact, it has been increased, as the hon. Health minister can articulate and already has.

Now, education has been cut: that’s the other one that the hon. member says. Well, that’s a misrepresentation of facts. Right there

in black and white in the budget it shows that education spending remains exactly the same.

Further to that, Madam Chair – you might find this interesting. There are two things, again, of misrepresenting facts repeatedly inside this Chamber, but then they said that children's services have been cut. In fact, the Children's Services budget has been increased – has been increased – not cut. The Community and Social Services budget cut according to the hon. member: not accurate. In fact, that budget has been increased. Seniors and Housing has also been increased.

The reality is that Albertans figured this out back on April 5, when they fired the NDP from government. They knew you could not trust what they said. Madam Chair, at the end of the day, the NDP just make it up. That's what they do. You see them do it each day in question period. You see the hon. member doing it here tonight. Yet again the NDP are presenting things over and over that are not factual.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about this private jet allegation from the hon. member. What it specifically has to do with Bill 21 I don't know, Madam Chair. But the reality is that the hon. member spent a significant amount of time speaking about it in regard to that legislation, so I guess he certainly feels that it has something to do with this piece of legislation. So let's talk about that a little bit. As the Premier said, he had a group of Premiers from all across the country and they had to use a plane to be able to get them to a meeting. If I recall – I'm looking at my colleague the hon. Minister of Finance – it was a \$16,000 flight.

Mr. Toews: Yes.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I could be off slightly on that. I got confirmation: it was \$16,000. He flew them there, and they had a meeting. To build coalitions across this country is a priority, I would say, and he did that. He met with the Premiers.

Now, fast-forward a couple of months later, and just yesterday the Premier returned from Toronto. What did he do when he was in Toronto, Madam Chair? He came back from Toronto with the support of every Premier in this country to stand up for the province of Alberta. Every Premier, including Quebec and Ontario, B.C., and the territories to the north. Obviously, of course, not surprising that Saskatchewan and Manitoba would be in that group as well as the Maritimes. He came back with the support of all of them to stand up for this province and this country against Justin Trudeau and Bill C-69. That's what he did. That's what happens when you build bridges like our Premier has.

Now, the other contrast is what the now Leader of the Official Opposition did when she was Premier when it came to Bill C-69. I think it's a great example because it's a direct comparison with what the Premier just did in Ontario. We go back now to what the former Premier did. The current leader of the NDP, still leader even when she was Premier but now Leader of the Opposition, sat in this Chamber for 200 and some days while members of the opposition, including myself, sat in the benches they're in now and asked them questions each and every day about why they wouldn't get on an airplane and fly down to Ontario and stand up for this province to Justin Trudeau in advance of Bill C-69.

You want to criticize the now Premier of Alberta for spending \$16,000 to help build a coalition of Premiers across this country to stand up for this province? Madam Chair, that's ridiculous. Through you to that hon. member, that is a ridiculous argument. I am proud that our Premier has taken the time to build those relationships with Premiers across the country, and now you're seeing the results in regard to the equalization rebate agreement from Premiers, that that is something we should look at. That alone

could result in well over a billion dollars. The hon. Finance minister is going to give me that number in a moment, too.

Mr. Toews: One point seven.

Mr. Jason Nixon: One point seven billion dollars. Well, I can tell you that if it cost you \$16,000 to get all the Premiers together to be able to result in well over a billion dollars returning to this province, my constituents will say: good job, Mr. Premier. I say, through you, Madam Chair, to him: good job, Mr. Premier.

Going and defending our province is not something to be ashamed of. Building bridges across this Confederation to be able to defend the interests of Alberta is not something to be ashamed of, and I certainly know that the Premier is not ashamed of it. I can certainly tell you that this government is not ashamed of it, and not one member of the government caucus is ashamed of it. We're proud of our Premier for doing that. We're proud of our Premier for standing up for our province. It's about time somebody did, Madam Chair.

Now, the hon. member likes to talk about rural Alberta. He makes no secret that he's not from rural Alberta – he represents an urban constituency – and I make no secret that I'm from rural Alberta though I love urban Alberta. I love rural Alberta. I love Alberta, but I'm proud to be from rural Alberta. I'm proud to be a rural Albertan. I'm proud to have raised my family in rural Alberta. I see that my little brother is laughing. I was born in urban Alberta, with him, but I saw the light, in my mind, and I moved to rural Alberta.

Mr. Toews: What part of Alberta?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Rural Alberta. I'm proud to be from rural Alberta, and I am proud to call rural Alberta home, and I am very proud of my constituents who are from rural Alberta, as I am of urban Alberta.

I don't see this as rural versus urban Alberta. We need urban Alberta and we need rural Alberta to succeed. It's about Alberta, but I am not ashamed to be from rural Alberta, and, yes, rural Alberta, like urban Alberta, has different needs on certain things. Our lifestyles are different, and we have different things that we need, and that hon. member seems to want to rise in the House and be able to say that he can articulate the concerns of rural Alberta and then ask: who's standing up for rural Alberta? Well, Madam Chair, that hon. member sat on this side of the House in a government who had every opportunity to be able to stand up and learn about rural Alberta, every opportunity to represent rural Alberta. In fact, they had members from all across rural Alberta, particularly in the north, and they had their chances.

Now look across the aisle. Look across the aisle. Not one member from rural Alberta. Rural Alberta spoke loud and clear on April 5 on who they want to represent them, and it ain't the NDP. So you should maybe think a little bit about that. Through you, Madam Chair, to the hon. member: think a little bit about your approach, because I can tell you that what the NDP is selling, rural Alberta ain't buying, and they ain't going to buy it any time soon. They have outright rejected the NDP because of their behaviour.

8:00

Now, this other thing, about trying to imply – and the hon. member went out of his way to make it clear that he was not referring to a member of the Legislature, which is good, because that would be unparliamentary – that supporters of the United Conservative Party were coming to his office to tell him that people on AISH should just get a job. Now, if somebody came to the hon. member's office and said that, shame on them. That is completely inappropriate and not something that this party would stand for at

all, nor should anybody stand for it. But let's think about that in the context of the fact that the NDP, as a general rule, are just making things up. We've seen it over and over. And now that hon. member somehow wants this House to believe that a random United Conservative Party member came to his office to visit with him just to tell him that people on AISH should get a job. If somebody did that, shame on them. But that's not how the Conservative side of the House thinks. That's not how this government thinks.

I was proud, when I was in opposition, to vote for the very first raise for AISH in a very, very long time. This government, under the leadership of the minister and the Finance minister, have kept that raise. They've kept that raise. The idea that somehow AISH is being reduced is not factual. That's another thing that is not factual. Yes, the indexing is not in place. The indexing was never in place under the NDP, not for one year. That's a fact. But at no time has anybody in this House tried to take away that increase for the people that are on AISH. At no time has anybody shown anything but compassion for people that are in those situations.

Madam Chair, my little brother, the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, and I had the privilege of working for many years with people that needed AISH. I understand why AISH is needed inside this province. I've seen people struggle to even get on AISH sometimes and to be able then to make ends meet. We understand that. We're deeply compassionate. That's an important part of our lives, and for that hon. member to in any way imply that anybody who has conservative thought somehow doesn't care about somebody who may need AISH is shameful and, quite frankly, just an absolutely ridiculous statement by that hon. member, and he knows it. He knows it.

You know what Albertans need? You want to talk about compassion? Albertans need us to get the economy going. They need to get people back to work. They need to get taxes flowing back inside this province. They need to be able to have the money to be able to get the services that people need, including people that find themselves in a spot where they have to be on AISH. That is exactly what the hon. Finance minister and this government are trying to do. That's what Albertans voted for, to get us back on track.

Madam Chair, why did we have to do it? Why did we have to find 2.8 cents in savings? That, in the grand scheme of things, is not as drastic as the NDP are trying to make it sound; that's for sure. I can tell you that in my constituency – do you want to know what rural Alberta thinks? Rural Alberta doesn't think it's that drastic. In fact, I would think many of my constituents think it's maybe a little low, but we are trying to find balance to be able to make sure we protect services.

What they really need – you want compassion? – is not what the NDP did. What the NDP did was oversee over a hundred thousand people losing their jobs. They sat on their hands while people inside my constituency lost their homes and hadn't worked for years. That hon. member talked about rural crime. They sat on this side of the House and laughed. Their leader laughed at us when we asked questions about what was taking place with rural crime inside our constituencies. Finally, now we've got a Justice minister that actually came to Rocky Mountain House. I know that became a funny thing in question period because the Justice minister kept inviting them to my home in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, but really in some ways it wasn't funny because I invited them for years to come out there and see what was happening to my constituents. That's not compassion, what they have done there.

Putting a carbon tax on fixed-income seniors and having them struggle to pay their bills: that's not compassion, Madam Chair. That's not compassion. What the NDP are trying to pass themselves

off as is absolutely ridiculous. That is the party that just seven months ago oversaw the demise of this province, put us into the largest debts in our history, the largest deficits in our history, oversaw the largest job loss in the history of this province, caused tens of billions of dollars of investment to flee this province under their watch. And they have the nerve to stand up here and act like they're compassionate? They're not compassionate. Tell that to all the job creators across this province who've lost their businesses, who risked everything while this side of the House, the former government, now the NDP, sat on their hands and didn't even bother to help them and, in fact, often criticized them, that it was somehow a bad thing to be a job creator and create businesses and put people to work inside this province. Well, shame on them for that. They want to say shame on us and that we're not compassionate and then mislead Albertans as a party in regard to what is actually taking place with the budget.

Let's talk about farmers and ranchers. The hon. member is now the great champion of rural Alberta. Well, I could tell you that the farm and ranch community certainly didn't support the NDP. Why? Why did they not support the NDP? Interestingly enough, Madam Chair, they did support them in northern Alberta in 2015, but they did not support them in northern Alberta in 2019. Why? Because that party sold out farm and ranch communities. They sat in the same benches that are right here. The former Finance minister, sitting right where the current Finance minister of Alberta was sitting, said to me – and you can go see it on Facebook – that farmers and ranchers inside my communities were deliberately trying to hurt their employees. He said that, said that they were trying to force them to put hands in machines so that they could lose their hands and all this stuff. Look, I put it up on Facebook because I couldn't believe it at the time. That's not compassion. That's not respect for the people that built this province.

It's absolutely ridiculous that the NDP keep doing this. The reason why it frustrates me so much isn't because we sit here and listen to this. In fact, Madam Chair, most of the time when I hear the NDP misleading with misrepresenting facts inside this process, I just shake my head and move on. But the reality is that this time around they're scaring people for no reason. Telling people that health care is cut when it's not cut and it's increased is scaring people for no reason. Telling people that Education has been cut when it has not been cut is scaring people for no reason. Telling people on AISH that their benefits are going to go down when they're not going to go down is scaring people for no reason over and over and over, and there's no need for that.

The Official Opposition has a responsibility in this Chamber, and they should do it, Madam Chair. They should do their role. In fact, earlier today I helped them do that by taking a bill and putting it back into committee because they wanted more opportunity to debate that bill and do amendments on that bill. That's their job. So I stood up for them in this Chamber as Government House Leader and brought it back to committee to help them. But what their job is not to do is to not go out of their way to scare everyday Albertans, who are working hard and living their lives across this province, who don't have time, obviously, to go through the entire hon. Finance minister's budget in detail, like we do in this Chamber. They elected us to do that. They depend on their elected representatives to tell them what is taking place inside this Chamber or with the budget, and then their elected representatives stand up in this House and over and over and over say that there are cuts that are taking place that are not taking place.

Madam Chair, that hon. member knows that Health spending has increased. He knows that. I've known him a while. He's definitely capable of reading the budget, and I've seen him talk about the budget in detail in standing committees and when I've served on

standing committees with that hon. member before. He knows that. He also knows that the Education budget hasn't been reduced. He knows that, but he chooses to spend his time in this Chamber trying to create fear. At the end of the day, that's what the NDP Party, sadly – sadly – have become.

It is shocking to me that the NDP still have not taken the time to find out why they sit on that side of the House. I could tell you. I was there when the Progressive Conservative Party was ousted in 2015, and all of us sat on that side of the House. I could tell you that the very first thing that we did, Madam Chair – I know you were there – was that we took time and we sat down and said: what the heck went wrong? We started to adjust to that, started to recognize the mistakes of our party and the mistakes of some of those who came before us. We began to adjust it. That's how we ended up back on this side of the Chamber. Albertans gave us the privilege of representing them as their government again in here because we took the time to do that. The NDP, clearly, have not done that if you just listened to that speech.

At the end of the day, you know why that is, Madam Chair? Because they're angry with Albertans. They're mad at Albertans because Albertans fired them. They're mad at Albertans because Albertans rejected their carbon tax. They're mad at Albertans because Albertans rejected their terrible fiscal mismanagement. You know what they're most mad at Albertans about? Because Albertans saw through their fear and smear and were not going to accept being misled by the NDP Party anymore.

Madam Chair, through you to Albertans, I want to assure them that this government will not do the behaviour of the Official Opposition. We will continue to fulfill the promises that we made to them inside this Chamber, we will continue to stand up for them each and every day, we will continue to bring this province forward in the most compassionate way that we can while trying to make sure that our province succeeds, and, yes, up to and including sitting here each and every night and listening to the bizarre behaviour of the NDP as they continue to try to scare Albertans. I will still continue to repeatedly stand up and say, Madam Chair, through you to them: "Shame on you. Shame on you for your behaviour, shame on you for your behaviour when you were in government, and shame on you for your behaviour now. Stop doing it. Stand up and do your job for real. Stop scaring Albertans."

8:10

The Chair: Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And now for something completely different and factual. There are a couple of things in this bill that I'd like to speak to. I know I have had the opportunity to speak to a couple of different sections of this bill, but two of the things that I feel like I haven't touched on too much and that I really want to talk about are changes with respect to Advanced Education and changes with respect to Health, in part because they influence one of the things that ultimately, I think, drove me into politics. That is the view that when we're budgeting, ultimately what we're having is a collective discussion about our values. It is a way that signals our values. I've heard it said: "Don't tell me what your values are. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what your values are." I think that it is true, because it's very easy to pay lip service to something, but to actually make that investment is more challenging.

One of the reasons, I think, that that is so incredibly important is that it is absolutely possible to save money in the short term that costs you far, far more in the long term. It's possible to affect your bottom line in a positive way in one year but actually cost yourself

10 times more in future years. I think, for instance, of my house. Say that I were to choose not to replace my roof when it needed replacement. Potentially, that could wind up with mould going all through my house, and that would be much more expensive. So even though I appeared to be a competent fiscal manager and saved myself the cost of the roof in one year, ultimately the cleanup of the rest of the house and the restoration, potentially, of the rest of the house would cost orders of magnitude more. Some of these cuts, I think, do exactly that.

I'm going to start with Advanced Education. I think that, at the end of the day, Madam Chair, Advanced Education is one of the ways in which we most successfully prepare our people for the future, through which we diversify the economy. I think that, at the end of the day, this is an incredibly important area to invest in. I also believe that people should have the right to access education based on how hard they're willing to work, not based on how much money their parents have, not based on the family that they were born into, not based on the location in which they were born but based on how hard they're willing to work and what they can achieve. I think that should be a fundamental value that we all share.

This bill, in my view, attacks that because what it does is that it allows tuition to increase at massive rates. What that means is that when people are being selected for university, instead of being selected on the basis of their past performance, instead of being selected on the basis of their marks or their volunteer work or various other contributions that they themselves have made, they are selected based on how much money they have access to. You know, when you're 17 and you're applying for university, the money that you have access to is based, in large part, on your parents' financial situation. What I don't like about these changes, the suspending of the tuition cap, is that it changes things so that those who are getting into university are those who have greater financial means as opposed to those who have worked harder. That fundamentally conflicts with my values, and I think that it conflicts with the values of a lot of Albertans.

Seeing tuition costs skyrocket at the same time that we're talking about increasing interest on student loans: I think that's a challenge. I think that's a challenge for a lot of people. I'm sad that this is the direction of our advanced education system, because education is the great leveller. It's what allows everyone the ability to make the best of themselves in society. Education is fundamentally something that I think everyone deserves to have the right to access. I think that education should be accessible, again, based on what you've done, on your performance, on your marks, on your volunteer work, not on your parents' financial situation, over which you had no control. You were simply born into that situation. So that is one part of the bill that I think is very bad. Obviously, I think all parts of this bill are bad, but in particular I wanted to highlight that one.

Again, I think that this reduction in Advanced Education – why I don't like it from a fiscal standpoint? Because it costs us more in the long run. We save a little bit of money now; meanwhile people don't have that access to education. People don't have the opportunity to get out there and get the education they need to have businesses and diversify the economy and contribute in the ways in which we can. When we're selecting the individuals who are ultimately going to hold those positions on the basis, again, of their parents' financial means rather than the basis of their own achievement, I don't think we're necessarily creating the best economy for the future, and I think that costs us all, each and every one of us.

The other part I wanted to talk about in this bill that I think also potentially has that impact of saving money in the short term and ultimately costing more in the long term: one of the things this bill

does is that – it doesn't do it, but it allows the government the ability to unilaterally terminate the doctor compensation agreement. Now, obviously, the compensation agreement for physicians that we were handed in government was not something we were delighted with. It was handed to us by the previous Conservative government. It grew in costs at 8 per cent a year, every year for 10 years, which is not, in my view, prudent.

So we went back, and we sat down with the doctors. I'm so proud of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and the work that she did. She saved this province half a billion dollars in doctors' costs. I think that's exceptional. She did it without creating strife and without violating agreements. She went to the table and she asked people to come to the table and said: look, this is the situation we're in. They voluntarily came to the table and helped out. This was actually the case with many people throughout the province who voluntarily came to the table and committed to take less or to take zeroes. I think we should thank those people for being willing to be committed to the province and not punish them or call them out or call them lazy.

This gives the government the ability to alter those contracts unilaterally. Why this concerns me: I'll just take one example. One of the things that's being floated out there right now is to remove an additional cost that goes to family physicians when dealing with complex care. Why does that upset me? Because what it means is that physicians essentially, if they're dealing with a more complex client, are not getting compensated for that time, so they're having to volunteer their time. Well, as anyone who's ever run a business knows, there are certain things that you'll do out of the goodness of your heart to give back to those in the community around you because that's an important part of running a business. But it's also the case that you can't work for free because you have costs to cover. You have an office to cover. You have staff to pay. You can't volunteer a hundred per cent of your time because it's not going to work in the long run.

What this does is that because it makes those doctors have to treat those more complex patients for free, it means that some doctors just aren't going to take any on at all because they're not interested in volunteering their time, and other doctors are likely to find themselves in the position where they can't volunteer a hundred per cent of their time. They have staff to worry about to pay, they have office costs to pay, so they're not going to be able to absorb all of those complex clients. This is bad for doctors because they're having to turn patients away. It's bad for patients because they're not getting their needs met. Ultimately, it's bad for the system, and it's bad for the bottom line. Those complex patients don't vanish into thin air just because the government refuses to acknowledge them. They go to acute care. They walk into the emergency room, where it costs us multiple times that amount to treat them, where it costs us far, far more than it would have cost us simply to give them access to a family physician, where potentially they wait until they get much sicker, and then they have to be hospitalized.

8:20

I liken this to a situation that I've always found interesting, where someone presents with something like bronchitis. We're not willing to pay for their antibiotics because we don't have universal drug coverage. We don't pay for their antibiotics, so they get worse, and eventually they get pneumonia, and then we pay orders of magnitude more to hospitalize them. Well, that doesn't make a lot of sense, really. I think that this is a very similar situation, and it upsets me because it's trying to play a shell game. It's trying to save money this year by spending more money somewhere else. I think that's bad for all of us. It's bad for political discourse because it

doesn't appropriately communicate what we're talking about. Most of all, it's bad for these patients.

So those are two pieces of the legislation that I feel that I wanted to highlight and get a chance to talk about why they're frustrating to me. I think with that, I will finish. I'm sure I will get a chance to address this issue again. I think that there are a lot of pieces that are of concern in this particular bill.

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

Hon. members, indulge me for a minute. I have a friend visiting from Airdrie who has joined us in the gallery, Pastor Biyi from Airdrie, my friend Biyi. Anyway, I know we're not in introductions, but I'm the chair, so I can do that.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm rising this evening to speak in committee to Bill 21, entitled Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019. Of course, one of the questions that I have asked many times rising in bill debate around this extensive piece of legislation – it's quite a long bill with a number of different bills amended within it – is: fiscal sustainability for whom? Certainly, the deficit this year is \$2 billion higher than the deficit last year. Certainly, we are at the end of the forecast period under consideration in these budget papers, expecting \$93 billion in debt in this province, so that is virtually the same as was forecast at the Q3 economic update earlier in 2019.

Certainly, this bill itself contemplates a number of changes to the bottom line for ordinary people given as it is paired with, obviously, the legislation that we passed earlier this year around reducing the corporate income tax rate for already profitable corporations, paired with, of course, the increase in personal income tax of some \$600 million by the end of 2022, sort of mildly ridiculously referred to as a savings for government when, in fact, it is an increased cost for ordinary people, some \$200 to \$300 in the first instance for a typical family, for an average family. That, of course, will continue to rise, given that the government has not articulated any form of end in sight to that particular tax hike for people.

This Bill 21 also contains within it some of the more cruel and unusual pieces of public policy. Not a year ago members of this government caucus voted for indexation of benefits. It took them less than a year to turn their backs on recipients of assured income for the severely handicapped by reversing that indexation, having the temerity to refer to that as not onerous at \$30 a month in the first instance. Of course, it will escalate through the power of compound interest, Madam Chair, over the years. Again, this government has made absolutely no commitment to any end in sight for AISH recipients or people who receive Alberta Works or people who are beneficiaries of the seniors' lodge program. That indeed is an element that many Albertans find distasteful, that there has been no straight talk with people who receive those benefits or many other benefits such as the seniors' lodge program and the monthly allowance for people in long-term care. If I know anything about seniors, and I do – I represent a very large number of seniors in Lethbridge – they notice and they vote, Madam Chair. So that is a thing that is real for the government's consideration in Bill 21.

There are a number of other measures contemplated in Bill 21 that I want to speak to this evening that I haven't yet. First of all, there were some measures around health care that are both interesting and I think are designed to introduce chaos into our publicly administered health care system and certainly undermine the consensus that Albertans have that a single-payer health care system is indeed the way that we want to take care of ourselves and one another. In particular, we have – it seems, anyway, coming from this government – a great deal of appetite to pick a big fight

with doctors. Allowing changes to the master agreement with the Alberta Medical Association has enabled in this bill, in the first instance, essentially setting up a situation where the members of the AMA are expected to bargain in good faith, but the government is not. That makes for not only an uneven playing field but a great deal of frustration among physicians and instability in the system. Instability in the patient-doctor relationship ends up being patients who suffer, ultimately. Physicians are only too aware of this, which is why they have spoken out against the provisions in this bill.

I certainly have heard from physicians in Lethbridge who are not amused, Madam Chair, not in the slightest, with this very unilateral, heavy-handed move by this government contained hidden within a bill that also does a number of other things and sort of shoved through in a massive omnibus exercise, reminiscent of the way Stephen Harper governed. Well, we know what happened after people grew tired of that type of governing. They showed them the door.

You know, I do believe, though, that there are a number of legitimate conversations that we ought to be having around the future of our health care system. There is no question that a system as complex as our medicare system, which is, of course, the envy of the world, requires constant improvement. Even the master agreement with the AMA: as it comes to an end and expires, it ought to be renewed. Of course, there can be improvement on that agreement as we go along but not in a situation where we are actively sowing the seeds of bad faith. That, in particular, if the government is looking for amendments, would be a good-faith one and to simply not move forward with that and just move forward with good-faith bargaining. We were able to do it and achieve significant savings on this side of the House when it was our turn to do it. They can do it, too, Madam Chair.

But if that's still on the table, then might I suggest some other priorities for Lethbridge health care, in particular, and in southern Alberta. I think, in the first instance, the government ought to commit to keeping the Pincher Creek, Cardston, and Raymond hospitals open. There is a great deal of concern as they close acute-care beds and open continuing care beds, this so-called repurposing. There have been many conversations about what that means. Rural hospitals are certainly at risk. To that list I will also add the Milk River hospital.

Certainly, our government made a commitment to a cardiac catheterization lab at the Lethbridge hospital. I've spoken about that. I've spoken with constituents that I ran into door-knocking who pleaded with me to continue to raise this issue. We require this service. I see it nowhere in these budget papers. If the government is looking for actual good-faith initiatives in terms of improving our public health care system, that might be one. I've met with constituents lately who are very concerned about the availability of dementia care units in southern Alberta and in Lethbridge, family members who have been able to find care, but they are seeing strains in the system, and they are worried about the future of dementia care. Dementia respite care is something that Lethbridge still requires. I just had a meeting with a concerned constituent last week on that matter.

8:30

Certainly, registered nurse supervised intoxic facilities are something that this government has said that they in notional terms are committed to but have yet to make good on.

Supportive housing and wraparound services in our downtown was a commitment that was made under our government. The funding was committed to, yet it has yet to materialize in Lethbridge.

The Lethbridge Chinook hospital emergency doctors are beginning to speak out about the state of our emergency department and what they fear for the future of our ability to meet public health care needs in southern Alberta.

Family physicians are starting to reach out to me and to others about the unilateral changes that have come as a result of this government's actions. They are worried that they are not going to be able to spend more than 10 or 15 minutes with people who have complex care needs. Certainly, we see a number of these folks in Lethbridge, where we struggle with one of the most acute per capita opioid crises in the country and, indeed, on the continent.

Certainly, administration costs have been something that the south zone AHS has taken very seriously, and they are in fact the lowest in the province, as I am briefed. While Alberta, according to CIHI, has the lowest administration cost for a health care system in the country, the south zone is leading on these things, so perhaps instead of the pugilistic tone that the province has set with both AHS and its workers and with its administrations and physicians, it may want to look at those best practices in the south zone and emulate them elsewhere.

Now, the reason why I bring these things up and the reason why it's so important is, first of all, that this bill allows for a number of new approaches to collective bargaining. Certainly I don't believe that, while it may be that if people were interested in good-faith collective bargaining that was not happening inside the media, that was moving along consistent with the principles of the rule of law, consistent with the principles that have been articulated through about three or four Supreme Court decisions on this matter now – it might be that I would have no problem with some of these provisions in Bill 21 in terms of this so-called grade of oversight over collective bargaining with public-sector employees and working with the agencies, boards, and commissions that are ultimately the employer. However, what we've seen from this government, both in action and in word, is an increasingly hostile and arrogant posture with respect to public-sector workers, the majority of whom are women that are under consideration in the health care system and in the education provision, although we're not talking about that right now.

In Lethbridge what we see is that about 1 in 5 dollars in the GDP and about 1 in 5 workers are in fact public-sector workers. This is a large chunk of the economy that are nurses, LPNs, auxiliary nurses, people who work in AHS warehouses, lab techs, physios, occupational therapists, of course counselling therapists, psych nurses, orderlies, maintenance staff. This is to say nothing of our paramedics and hard-working firefighters, who respond when we need them. Bargaining with all of these groups of workers is now a matter of a great deal of unnecessary strife. It introduces an unnecessary amount of stress around kitchen tables in my riding and elsewhere, but I was elected here to stand up for those folks in Lethbridge who are worried about their livelihoods because of this attack on both public-sector workers and the value of their work because of certainly the privatization agenda that drives this and, ultimately, because this government remains committed to undermining our public health care system.

This is why we repeatedly hear the Premier mocking anyone who might raise concerns about our public health care system. No one in Lethbridge elected me not to stand up to that. We all need health care, ultimately, and none of us can afford thousands of dollars out of pocket either for private health insurance or for simply paying out of pocket to jump the queue. Certainly, those of us who would be left behind, that is to say those of us who are not in the 1 per cent, would be left with a much diminished system if indeed this government moves ahead with some of these attacks on public health care.

You know, what we saw on Friday, as a result of this collective bargaining process that is now moving along and some of the changes that are contemplated in Bill 21, is that approximately 7,000 people across the province will lose their jobs. That'll mean hundreds in the city of Lethbridge. Hundreds in the city of Lethbridge. The effects on our small business, on our real estate and housing markets, on our entire economy, which relies on both the public and the private sectors, will be innumerable.

One question that I have had over and over again is: where is the analysis on what will happen to our economy? We have some Disneyland fantasyland analysis of how many jobs will come by magic through the reductions in the corporate income tax rate for already very profitable large corporations, analysis that was, in fact, based on Canadian economic indicators, not Albertan, so it's flawed in the first instance. We have heard that from the province, but what we haven't seen baked in is what their projections are for the slowdown in economic activity, particularly in areas where we see a number of public-sector workers, what that will mean for overall demand in those cities, what it will mean for our housing markets, our property values, and what it will ultimately mean for ordinary people.

Now, I have said at many points in this House before that Lethbridge is known for two things. It is known for students, and it is known for seniors. I notice here a number of changes in the postsecondary system. Before I sit down, I would like to speak to those on behalf of my constituents. Both Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge posted record high enrolment this year, the most enrolment they've ever seen. That means approximately, well, at least 6,000 students at U of L. Given the full load equivalent at Lethbridge College and the fact that they have more part-time students, I'm not sure about the numbers there, but I do know that they had record high enrolments at both institutions. What we are seeing here is ending the tuition freeze, so those students will be paying more out of pocket, or their parents will be.

Obviously, that has an effect on Lethbridge families, but it has a profound effect on Calgary families as well. A number of Calgary families send their kids to the University of Lethbridge because it's reasonably close but it's a little bit far away so that, you know, there's a bit of independence there. It's an affordable town to live in. Rental prices are not overly exorbitant like sending, you know, a kid to the Lower Mainland, for example, or places like that. It's a small enough town that kids aren't going to get lost, right? So a lot of Calgary parents send their kids to the U of L for those first couple of years or to Lethbridge College for the first couple of years. What they are going to see now is a massive increase in those costs, not just around tuition but potentially around other costs as well, certainly for student loan interest, increased by 1 per cent, plus ending the tuition tax credits that either students themselves or their parents avail themselves of over the course of a postsecondary degree.

Now, postsecondary is that great leveller. It is a place where international students come, and they decide that they want to stay. Then they achieve their permanent residency, and we are all better off for it. It is a place for kids like me, who grew up in rural Alberta, who had a grand total, I think, on my dad's side of one relative who had ever attended university – none on my mom's side, but my dad's – to actually go and achieve a graduate degree. I went in the Klein years, so there was a student loan there, but still, those things would not be possible without publicly accessible postsecondary education. We did see that that kind of accessibility, particularly for people of more modest backgrounds, lower income kids, working-class kids like me.

8:40

Over the course of the Klein years we did see reductions in accessibility. We did see lower participation rates happening in Alberta that were different than in other provinces. We had a distinction, a not very laudable one, of being the jurisdiction with the lowest participation rates and some of the lowest high school completion as well. That path out of high school and into some form of postsecondary education, regardless of what it might be, was simply not available to people as tuition was skyrocketing.

Now, we've been able to stabilize some of those costs. I know that there are many, many working-class people, whether they are newer to Canada, whether they come from lower income backgrounds or they come from backgrounds that are not necessarily lower income but it wasn't sort of done in their family to go to university – I know that bringing down those costs was something that made university more accessible to people, not that everyone should go to university. Far from it. But that made some of those dreams, whether it was to be an engineer or a physician or a nurse, that are only achievable though university education more possible for people.

The Chair: Hon. members, we've got lots of visitors here tonight. Because it's almost Christmas, I would just like to recognize some constituency managers up in the gallery: Tasha Schindel, the constituency manager for Calgary-Acadia; and Miguel Racine, the constituency manager for the hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing. Welcome here. It's a pleasure to have a visible audience. We know there are so many people tuned in online.

With that, I will be seeking additional speakers to the bill. The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Chair: Hon. members, we are still in Committee of the Whole.

Bill 20

Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 20. I've spoken to this bill a few times, mostly focusing on some of the major concerns to the film industry, also the concerns with the Alberta lottery fund. Today I'm going to be focusing on the Alberta lottery fund and what I've been hearing from constituents as well as Albertans all over the province with their concern about these cuts and the changes in this piece of legislation, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. There are so many agencies and communities across the province, nonprofits that rely heavily on the lottery fund. They have reached out through e-mail, through walking into my office, phone calls, conversations at the grocery store, you name it. People are concerned about what's happening, and they would like to have a voice.

I've been forwarded a document from Vital Signs through the city of Edmonton. They're an organization that is through Edmonton Community Foundation. They're the fourth-largest community foundation in Canada. They

help stimulate change and community growth by supporting donors and granting in the following areas: community and social services; arts, culture and heritage; health and wellness;

education and learning; environment; recreation and leisure; and social enterprise.

They've compiled a document, where they've done a lot of research through the city of Edmonton, about how some of the programming that is offered in the city impacts Edmontonians, those coming into Edmonton as tourists. We have information about sports and rec that is put on in communities where we know we host many different events, where it's minor soccer or baseball, and communities come to Edmonton to use our facilities. There's a major concern with what's happening in this piece of legislation with the Alberta lottery fund and what communities are going to be eligible to provide to their communities going forward.

I thought I would share some of these incredible statistics that they've compiled through the Edmonton Social Planning Council. Their vital statistics website says that they are

an independent non-profit, non-partisan, social research organization. Established in 1940, [they conduct] research and analysis into a wide range of topics, particularly in the areas of low income and poverty. The council's publications and reports provide the public and government with current and accurate information to support informed decision-making.

Now, I would like to think that government perhaps looked at this document, but what I'm hearing across the floor as well as from the community is that there is a sense of not feeling consulted with, not feeling that they were a priority when decisions to cut were made. So I would just like to share some of these incredible statistics. One of them that is quite amazing: it says that 76.3 per cent of Albertans attended an arts event in 2018, so that's saying that Alberta cares about art and they care about what's happening in the province. We have the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the operational grant recipients. They exceed the population of the province. They're an organization where it is their job to make sure that Albertans have an ability to access art, children are exposed to art in their schools, and their whole philosophy is being able to bring art to Albertans.

We know that when people are coming through the province, we have some incredible museums, and we have beautiful art throughout our cities that showcases Alberta artists. It's amazing. If you just even walk out of the Legislature and down 108th Street, there's glass blown on every single streetlight, and that was done with a local artist here in Edmonton who blows glass and worked with a school in Highlands-Norwood to teach kids how to do that. It's incredible that these young people get this one-on-one time with an artist from Edmonton, and now their art is showcased right here in Edmonton across from our beautiful Legislature, all the way down 108th Street. It's those little things in our city that make it so beautiful, and it's those things that people are really, really nervous about being cut and what happens.

We know that the arts community is very strong in Alberta and that it includes a wide variety of different disciplines like literature, drama, poetry, prose, performing arts, dance, music, theatre, media and visual arts, drawing, painting, filmmaking, architecture, ceramics, sculpting, and photography, just to name a few. There are artists here that are both paid and unpaid. A lot volunteer, give back to the community, but a lot of them also rely on grants that they would have been able to apply for through the Alberta lottery fund, and now that that's going into general revenue, there is a fear that they're no longer going to be able to access that funding.

We know that people in arts community are passionate about sharing their art. There are those perhaps like myself: if I do a piece of art, it's for my own enjoyment in my own home. But there is art that needs to be seen and enjoyed. We know that there's evidence of healthy lifestyles in being exposed to the arts community. Art therapy is something that can help with self-expression, it can manage pain, and it's been proven to reduce fatigue, stress, anxiety.

The 2018-2019 Health Arts Society of Alberta will bring more than 400 professional musicians to perform for elders in care across the province. That, to me, is absolutely amazing, knowing that there are seniors that can enjoy art in their seniors' facility or at their community centre. Knowing that that is something that might be taken away by removing the Alberta lottery fund is a fear that I'm hearing. When we talk about the positive impacts of the arts, we know that it is definitely something that can have an impact on your mental health, on your mood. It's something, whether you're experiencing it or you're doing it, that has a positive impact. It just makes me really nervous that this is something that's going to be potentially taken away.

8:50

Talking about equity in the arts, there are parts of the statistics that say that equity in the arts has a long way to go, that women make up 51 per cent of the 650,000 art workers in Canada but represent only 25 per cent of artistic directors. Minority women are more likely to have contract positions and less likely to be in full-time positions of leadership. Now, this is a statistic that I know isn't unique to art, but when we look at the praise and recognition, 72 per cent of directing awards were given to men; 62 per cent of playwright awards were given to men.

The arts community is working at looking through the lens of diversity and equality. This is a great way to empower our young girls to get involved. Arts is such a personal expression. They're taking that leadership and looking at ways to help support girls and women in expressing themselves, so when we have a government that has the status of women and culture under her ministry, this is something that is concerning, that it's not being talked about. It's not being considered, the impacts when we're cutting programs like the Alberta lottery fund. I wonder how much of that lens has been looked at when they're cutting programs like this, the impact on our women and our young girls.

We know that a lot of this legislation impacts people with disabilities. We have 27 per cent of members who are hard of hearing or living with a disability that earned less than \$20,000 per year as compared to 18 per cent of able-bodied members in theatre and live performances. My daughter is in postsecondary right now, becoming an interpreter for the deaf. Knowing that she could have a job in assisting someone who's going through an arts program, she is, in essence, going to be exposed to that. I think that when we look at the different jobs that she might have as an interpreter for the deaf community, it's sad to me that perhaps someone that would apply for a grant from the deaf community might not be eligible anymore and might miss out on that opportunity.

We know that there should be a focus on equity and looking at women and people with racially diverse backgrounds and people with different abilities. The arts community is actively looking at that and making sure that this is something that they're addressing when they're going forward with their programming and when they're developing their art structures for the province. I think that it's really important to know that this is something that is being tracked and it's being studied, and we have statistics that show that this is something that's important.

We know that there's a lot of volunteerism that happens in the arts community. While a lot of them are asking for grants, a majority of people come together because they're passionate about this. When we look at the incredible people of Alberta, we know that they're philanthropists and they're people who give back in their community, so taking away the Alberta lottery fund is taking away those opportunities for people to stay engaged as a volunteer in their community.

This Vital Signs statistic shows that an average of 52,000 people volunteer each year to assist the arts in Alberta; 52,000 people are engaged in the arts program here in province. It says:

If volunteers were paid \$15 an hour . . .

The minimum wage unless you're a minor or a server.

. . . their labour would be worth more than \$28.5 million, equivalent to approximately 14% of the total revenue for the sector in the province.

That's amazing. We have people in this province that want to be engaged. They want to be involved somehow in the arts community. To me, 52,000 people would be impacted if that no longer was an option in the province.

We know that Edmonton and, I'm sure, many other communities across the province invest in art in their city. The city of Edmonton's Percent for Art program allows 1 per cent of the eligible construction budget of any publicly accessible municipal project for the acquisition of art. As of January 2019 there are 233 pieces of completed public art, and 29 are in progress. I think that is absolutely incredible. This is something that Edmonton has prioritized and wants to make sure that Edmontonians and those visiting our beautiful city have access to.

Now, if an artist comes forward and they have a submission and they would like to see something in the city, to know that they can't access that grant funding might mean that we don't have those pieces of art. We have some of the most beautiful art collections here in the province, and to know that that is at risk is something that concerns me, Madam Chair. When we look at the Alberta lottery fund and all of those organizations that rely on it, they're afraid of what that means and how it's going to impact what they do for their programming, the different activities that they do around the city. Art is a big part of that.

The other piece that's part of this statistic document is sports and recreation. I've spoken in the House a lot about being a sports mom. My kids are very involved in community sports. My oldest started with baseball, worked through soccer. All of that was provided through our local community leagues. Who provided those supports? Well, it was volunteers. Community leagues are run by volunteers, who are committed to making sure that people in the community have access to affordable sports, affordable programming, whether it's yoga or painting that's run out of that community hall. But in order to do that, they need funding. They rely on the Alberta lottery fund for a lot of that funding. If that's gone, what happens to our community leagues? What happens to that little league baseball tournament that happens every year in Castle Downs, where families come together? There have been families that continue to come and support and volunteer at the different venues years after their children stop participating in baseball. It's wonderful. It's a way for the community to come together and support one another. But they need their facility, they need their community league itself to do that.

Vital Signs has created some definitions about what they feel sports and recreation are. They've defined active living as "integrating regular exercise and physical activity into one's routine and valuing the physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs that these pursuits fulfill." We know that being physically active is important at all ages, whether it's your littles and they're learning how to skate or it's your seniors that are out dog walking or mall walking. Castle Downs has a really great community that is involved and is active and is reaching out to the constituents to see what they want. Community leagues are important, and having access to these things is absolutely essential.

We know that 49 per cent of Edmontonians participate in active recreation or organized sports. The main reasons that they've identified for participation: 80 per cent of it is fun and enjoyment;

78 per cent is health and well-being. According to the live active survey among those who are active in the top activities: 29 per cent are walking, running, jogging, hiking; 43 per cent are aerobics; 21 per cent are swimming. There's another statistic here, lack of participation: 51 per cent of Edmontonians did not participate in organized sport or active recreation in the past year. Among those not participating, the reasons are: 32 per cent, time and distance; 26 per cent prefer to spend time on other activities; 16 per cent was health or ability; 10 per cent was cost of activity. Participation in sport and recreation tends to increase as income increases. What this means to me is that those that don't have a lot of extra money aren't able to participate in sports. What community leagues do is that they provide that affordable opportunity to do that through grants and funding through the Alberta lottery fund.

9:00

When we see this statistic of 51 per cent of Edmontonians not participating, I would guess that that's probably pretty consistent across the province. When income is a factor, when organizations are no longer able to apply for grants for supports, that means that the cost of those activities is going to go up, which means that those participating are going to reduce. So when we look at those that have a fixed income or even a moderate income, the priority might not be to have their children participate in sports; it might not be the adults wanting to play volleyball. They can't afford it.

The other piece that struck me was the distance, that 32 per cent didn't engage in activities because of the distance. We rely so heavily on community organizations to provide programming that's close to home. When you can just walk down the street to your community league to access basketball or soccer, that reduces the barrier. When you then have to rely on public transportation to get to an activity, participation reduces significantly. My fear and the fear of so many that I'm hearing from is that by taking away programming within communities, you're impacting people's quality of life, their ability to actually participate in some sort of recreation.

We know that more than half, 54 per cent, of Canadian families are financially strained from their kids' extracurricular activities and that one in four, 27 per cent, have gone into debt as a result. So it's important for families to be able to have their children accessing these types of community-based programming, and it's important to the community leagues to be able to offer that.

I know that Castle Downs did a survey in the community, and we asked: "What do you want to see in your community? What's important?" The majority of people said that if they had programming where they could be active, where it was safe for them to do so and affordable, they would do it. What that meant was that Castle Downs had to consider investing in some more infrastructure within the community.

Some of the things that were talked about. You know, people say that you can go for a walk. It's something that's free. You can do it right out of your door. But when the community is saying that they don't feel safe because of poor lighting or access to, let's say, Beaumaris Lake because of the structure collapsing, these are things where the communities rely on provincial governments to help with funding, so that they can do something that's free for them, as simple as walking.

We know that by adding lighting – because we live in a province where it gets dark early, people work and by the time they want to go out after dinner, it's dark. We need to invest in simple things, and as a province we should be supporting communities in doing that. When the constituents are saying, "This is something that's important; this is something that we want to see," I think it's the provincial government's responsibility.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the call and to my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs for her people-centred commentary on what I think is a bill that is anything but people-centred, other than perhaps people-targeted because it seems like there are many, many attacks on individuals. We always hear about individual responsibility, but I think this is a heightened level of onus put on individual responsibility, something that certainly was not campaigned on in the last election and that, I would say, the government has no mandate to implement.

I'm going to talk about a few of the areas tonight that I haven't had a chance to talk about in great detail. The first one I'm going to touch on is the effects to municipal funding. The government plans to cut grants in lieu by 25 per cent this year, and it's planning to cut them by an additional 25 per cent next year. So grants in lieu: what is that? I'm not sure, maybe it was discussed somewhat at caucus. I doubt it was discussed extensively because I can tell you that municipalities expect people and businesses and government agencies that are in their communities or government buildings that are in their communities to pay for the services that we all receive.

Because one order of government that is subject to another order of government can't impose a tax bill on that order – so a municipality can't issue a tax bill to the provincial government – what has been done for as long as I can remember, Madam Chair, is that the provincial government had a grant in place of taxes. GPOT, I think, they often referred to it as. That grant in place of the tax base was already, arguably, not the full cost of what it would be to issue all of the services to those buildings and the folks who live and work there.

For example, many of us have offices in the Federal Building, and everyone else who doesn't has one in this building. The city plows the roads for us to get from our places of accommodation or permanent residence, whatever it might be, to this building to be able to do the work that we do here. When there are moments of crisis, we call on the city police to come and support us. They aren't here every day, thank goodness, but we know that there are times of crisis where we need to call on the city police, we need to call on local law enforcement, like we experienced just yesterday, Madam Chair. I think it behooves us to contribute to the cost of providing those services that benefit us all.

So these grants in place of taxes in this bill will be cut by 25 per cent this year, an additional 25 per cent next year, not exactly paying our fair share for the services that we receive from the municipality here in Edmonton. There are provincial buildings throughout this province. Many of our municipalities have provincially owned buildings, and they expect that the province will give them this grant in place of taxes, and while they would like it to be higher, they certainly didn't expect that it would be lower, 25 per cent reductions for each of the next two years. That definitely wasn't something that was in the Premier's speech at RMA, for example, or in the platform, that government is going to shirk some of its responsibilities when it comes to paying taxes for the buildings that has.

I think that that is not just a degradation of responsibility, but I'd say that it's quite embarrassing. I'd say that it's something the government – I get why it wasn't in the RMA speech, because I think it's something that probably embarrasses a lot of members, that I imagine many of your municipal and MD and county leaders have spoken to you about.

I know that when there was discussion of this when the government changed in 2015 and I was then minister of seniors, they were concerned that the government might not be paying their

taxes on all of the seniors' homes that we had throughout the province. We did what I would argue was the responsible thing and made sure that we paid our taxes. Now here we have a bill that is making it not only legal for the government to continue to cut what they pay in taxes but is downloading those pressures onto the very municipalities that have been counting on these grants in place of taxes.

Another piece is the 9 per cent cut for MSI funding for Calgary and Edmonton – well, isn't that just lovely – the MSI funding that they counted on for many years to provide the municipal sustainability that enables all of us to have the kinds of buildings and amenities and services that we expect. Imagine when folks are here in Edmonton, while they're here for work, that maybe they pop in at a public library or use the bus or the LRT or use a major road to get to and from this place. These are all things that MSI contributed to, and now that's being cut. What's going to happen – we've seen it already happen in this place – is that when Edmonton and Calgary are facing 9 per cent cuts, they're faced with looking at service reductions in excess of that, and of course the majority are people-centred in their budgets as well as in the provincial budgets.

[Mr. Getson in the chair]

So if you're looking at cuts of that magnitude, you're looking at the kinds of attacks on public services and on the very people who are being attacked further in this bill with what the now Premier has referred to in the past as an insidious tax grab, income bracket creep, right? So here we go. We're going to download things onto municipalities. We're going to download things onto individuals. So that is certainly very frustrating.

9:10

There's one little line in here, Mr. Chair. It's just one tiny line in section 10 now, I guess, and it repeals the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. It just says, "The City Charters Fiscal Framework Act is repealed." It's on page 55 of the bill. When we saw this bill tabled, the next day there were emergency meetings called for many municipalities across this province, and I attended the one here in Edmonton, for at least a portion of it. What the message was, loud and clear: promise made, promise broken.

It was actually in the platform of the now government that they would respect the city charters fiscal framework. Instead, this bill in one line repeals it. Not long to break that promise, that's for sure, and certainly disrespectful to the municipalities who did all of that negotiating in good faith. When they saw that it was in the platforms of both major parties in the last election, they had a great sigh of relief because this is something that had been such an ongoing work for many years, that was landed prior to the last election but committed to by both major parties in the last election. So, of course, there is significant anger and frustration on the part of the municipalities that are dealing with a broken promise yet again.

Yeah. So not paying taxes, breaking funding agreements, reducing the existing funding agreements, and then, of course, we have the addition of the 90-day clause, that has the ability to terminate without cause significant infrastructure projects that our two largest cities have been counting on for years, ones that the now Premier likes to say that he championed, but he's writing in these clauses to break the very commitments that were made by the last government, that he said he would maintain.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I'm going to pivot to some of the other areas that I think in some ways reflect on the very difficult news of this government's credit downgrade earlier today. Moody's brought in a downgrade. I don't

celebrate these types of things. I think it's not something that we're excited about. Certainly, I think when the government criticized downgrades in the past, when they were in opposition, they seemed to be celebrating them, and I take no enjoyment in this moment. I want you all to know that. But I'm going to reflect on a few of the pieces in the downgrade that comment on why this has been done and what I think in this bill actually furthers the situation and would lead us to further downgrades if the government doesn't take the advice of Moody's.

There are two areas that I want to refer to. One says that it "reflects Moody's opinion of a structural weakness in the provincial economy that remains concentrated and dependent on non-renewable resources – primarily oil." And it goes on to elaborate on that. So what's being done in this bill to end the structural weakness in the provincial economy? Well, it's actually furthering what Moody's says is a structural weakness, an overdependence on one commodity. Of course, I am very grateful that we have such a strong oil and gas industry, but it can't be our only industry.

Individual Albertans are called upon to diversify their own income regularly. I spoke with an artist just a couple of weeks ago who talked about how she would love to be able to do fine art all day every day, but of course that isn't an option. That wouldn't be a sustainable way to generate income, so she teaches, so she does public pieces, so she does commissioned pieces. You have to take what you've got and find ways to diversify your income base. If somebody who is a very talented fine artist can find ways to diversify her income, I think it certainly would be of benefit for a government that has the responsibility of creating an economy and supporting an economy for more than 4 million people to take that urgency that Moody's is saying around overdependence and structural weakness and diversify.

What's happening instead in this bill? Well, we're seeing the repealing again of different types of things that help support economic diversification. Here's another one: page 60, section 17. It repeals the interactive digital media tax credit. It's repealed upon proclamation. There's another one here, the film and television tax credit: significant changes to that. These are areas of our economy that were growing in recent years. Oh. And, of course, the small brewers, right? These are areas in our economy that were growing in recent years.

Of course, the intent is not to have them replace our primary industry; it's to have them augment the primary industry. Just as back in the time when my grandparents were homesteading, the main industry of the day was agriculture, we still have a very strong agricultural base in this province. But it wasn't sustainable for us to rely on that – or on trapping and fur trading – being our primary and sole industry indefinitely. It's important that as society continues to move forward, we continue to find ways to have a strong base in nonrenewable resources but to expand that into other parts of the economy.

Of course, something that I was proud to support the expansion of was our energy legacy in this province in areas in addition to oil and gas. With the PDP, obviously, we talked about getting full value and greater components out of our raw resources rather than always selling the most basic, raw version of our resources to other jurisdictions to have them upgrade, refine, send it back, and for us to pay a premium on that. Doing that work in Alberta to get better value and more jobs out of our resource was the responsible thing to do, but so was it the responsible thing to do to have the digital media tax credit.

This is an emerging industry and one where we as Albertans, I think, should be at the forefront and not following and looking for the leftovers from other jurisdictions. As well, the film and television industry: I know that any time I see any kind of glimpse

of Alberta in a TV show, in a movie, I get excited. I get that sense of pride, and a lot of Albertans do, whether it's the Strathcona farmers' market featured in a number of, you know, holiday movies or our beautiful Canadian Rocky Mountains, and there are other places across this province that get featured from time to time as well. Find ways to expand that, to expand, you know, both the actor, film director, editor sorts of positions but also the many blue-collar jobs that come on those sets as well, what are seen as some of the complementary pieces to the arts. There are a lot of people who work in television and film and in the theatre who really contribute to a diversified economy and the cultural fabric of this province. We are the sum of our many parts, and I definitely feel that this bill is attacking many of the parts that I think were growing and were contributing to a more diversified economy.

Moody's also talks about environmental risk. They talk about risk in relation to oil as well as floods and fires. Again, I think it's important that we act in a more proactive way rather than implementing short-sighted cuts like the cuts on the RAP program. Growing up in the north, I knew a bunch of RAP firefighters personally. I probably saw them from afar and admired them greatly, and there were a lot of kids in our town who, when they grew up, didn't just want to be firefighters; they wanted to be RAP firefighters. They wanted to be the men and women who jumped out of the helicopters and saved the farm or saved that trapline or saved that area of brush or saved your town. That's one of the areas that a lot of kids in the community I grew up in wanted to be a part of, and instead we have a budget that attacks the very programs that have been in place, many of them for decades.

And that's the thing. I think a lot of folks on the other side of the House like to say: well, we were sent here to undo what the NDP did. I would say that that's a very simplistic argument to give. I think there were a number of things that people weren't sending folks here to undo, but, okay, let's say that you buy that simplistic argument, that you're here to undo what was done in the last four years. Well, then, why undo things that have been done for the last 40 years: the RAP program – about 30 years in existence in this province – and a number of initiatives. Oh. And the ATRF: that was something that was set up as joint governance in 1939. You know, this is the same time as many of us hear the stories about our loved ones – my grandfather, for example – getting ready to go off to war. This is something that has been in place for far longer than the four years when there was a different party in power.

9:20

The party of today seems to feel that it is important to roll back time in such substantive ways, that I think are causing really deep and damaging impacts on future things. Like, when Moody's looks to see, "Okay; given the last downgrade and the advice that we gave, what's being done to implement those cautionary notes and to actually focus on diversification?" I fear that when they see the impacts of things like Bill 20, it is actually moving in the wrong direction and that it's going to make it more difficult for us, Madam Chair.

With that, I want to express again that I think that two omnibus bills, 20 and 21, that have such sweeping impacts on so many different areas that ordinary folks rely on, are disrespectful at best and, I think, are really damaging to the folks who rely on these programs. At the same time that we're telling people, "You can't get your tax credit anymore for your tuition, tuition that you've been saving up for and paying and struggling with, but we have the money to spend on things like flights to other jurisdictions for folks who work in the Premier's office," you know, I think that we have some questions to ask about what our priorities are and how it is that we're going to make sure that we support the diversification

that I think everyone deserves in this province. Again, I find these measures in this budget very regressive and far beyond the scope of what was campaigned on and what the mandate was given for.

Those are some of the comments I wanted to share with regard to Bill 20 at this point tonight. Perhaps there will be more later, but at this point those are my primary areas of concern that I wanted to highlight for my colleagues, again, those being the shirking of responsibility to pay taxes to municipalities; the cutting of major grants, including MSI, to municipalities; the shredding of the cities charter, that was committed to in the platforms of both political parties, certainly committed to in the government platform; the tax credits that would have moved us forward being eliminated, which I believe will move us backwards; and the attacks on tax credits for ordinary folks through the tuition tax credit elimination.

The Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I think this is my first time speaking to this bill. Looking at the bill, some of the changes being proposed in the bill are quite disturbing. It's very obvious that I won't be able to support this bill.

Of the changes this bill proposes, the very first thing I was looking at is the impact of ending the interactive digital media tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, the community economic tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, and the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. Looking at all those changes being proposed, I would say that this seems to be a very short-sighted, ideological, partisan decision that in no way is going to support economic prosperity, and definitely it will have an adverse effect moving forward to diversify our economy.

I would also say that this was a lost opportunity, that there was huge potential in this sector in Alberta. It could grow and help diversify the economy, and by this government's proposal Alberta will lose the huge potential in growing, I will say, the film industry. I really wanted to actually share a quote from one of the employers in this sector, Keith Warner. Keith Warner, whose video game studio, New World North, opened earlier this year and now employs 26 people and has some more positions still to be filled, said: it was a bitter pill for me to swallow; I will be honest; I was pretty upset.

The other thing, one more change I wanted to actually emphasize in this bill, is taking into consideration the end of the lottery fund. The government is going to move the money into the general revenue fund. Before coming to take on my new role after the general election in April, I was lucky to have the experience to be able to work with a number of community organizations and personally know many of those individuals who work day and night to keep those organizations going. They do volunteer work without any compensation after going to work from 9 to 5, and they give spare time, that they can easily choose to spend with family or doing some other activities, to try to help build the communities through those organizations by going and providing a platform in the communities to help promote local talent, bring communities together, build bridges between communities, and, not only that, also integrate those cultures into the larger Canadian mosaic.

Those are organizations that do fund raise in the communities. They do spend their volunteer time there, and they also, you know, depend on the funding from the lottery funds. Moving these funds to general revenue has actually created so much uncertainty for all those individuals. They deserve to have that funding from their government. On the contrary, the government has said that the government will still be supporting those programs, but there's a

lack of information. There is nothing specific to back up the government's claim. Those, you know, members of the organizations, of the communities cannot rely on the word that our government is actually claiming.

One of the other aspects that I just wanted to speak about: the government is actually proposing a change to child tax credits. They are rolling the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit into a single Alberta child and family benefit. By doing that, this is going to impact big time on Alberta families. The new Alberta child and family benefit will reduce – 465,000 Albertans will be impacted by this new income threshold. This includes 55,000 Albertans who will lose the benefit entirely. This is not a small number. You know, once again I just want to reiterate: 55,000 people who now receive these benefits will not be eligible to receive the benefits entirely if this bill is passed.

9:30

The other, you know, very disturbing thing. I was looking at the kind of change this is proposing. Families with a \$26,000 net income: how much can you assume that it does these days? To pay your mortgage, pay your rent, that even accounts for nearly \$12,000 to \$18,000, \$20,000. How much is left to take care of the well-being of the family or to put food on the table for the children, for the family? When the government worked on this, I don't know what kind of consultation they have done, what kind of work they have done, what kind of homework they have done on this. This is very disturbing news. The people making an income in the range of \$26,000, net family income, will be impacted by this, and the people, the families whose net income is more than \$41,000 or \$43,000 will lose the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta child and family tax credit base. These are the kinds of changes I'm looking at being proposed by this bill.

It's for sure that there's no way that we can support this bill. I'm going to be, actually, very brief. I have more to say on this bill. I was going to link some of the information to moving the lottery fund into general revenue. The government says, you know, that they will still back up those programs. I have spent, like, six months asking these questions many times to the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. She is not even sure and not even clear on the cuts the ministry is – actually, it's already cut. They have cut the community facility enhancement program. The community initiatives program has been cut 35 per cent and the other program by 8 per cent. The question has been raised many times that the worst impact that that is going to have is going to be on the community organizations. Not only this, but a number of people from the organizations are coming to our office and sharing their concerns. Their applications for these grants are being declined, and now they are going to lose even their dependency on the lottery fund. That's very concerning.

For those reasons, I actually oppose this bill and also, you know, urge the government members of this House to give more time and think again, take a thorough look at the kind of changes being proposed. This is going to hurt everyday Albertans. This is going to hurt some of the very important work being done in our communities, and this is a lost opportunity of the potential we had, actually, to grow the film industry.

Thank you, Madam Chair. With these comments, thank you once again.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity tonight to rise and speak to Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. This essentially is a budget bill.

It's not the budget bill, but a large portion of what we see going on within this bill is, as is stated right there in the title, fiscal measures and taxation to help achieve this government's ends.

I want to reflect a little bit on what I've been hearing and seeing from this government in terms of how they view going about achieving a budget balance, about how they view achieving what they feel needs to be a flushing out, shall we say, of government waste or red tape or debt and deficit. Indeed, it was I believe the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction that offered this House a fairly colourful analogy of how he viewed that process taking place and his thoughts on the concerns that we've raised as the Official Opposition about the manner in which this government has been going about its promise to balance the budget while attempting to also backfill, of course, the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate giveaway. That minister rose in this House – and I quote from the eternal words of *Hansard*, to which this minister so kindly donated his careful thoughts. He said, “Now, Mr. Speaker, if they are going to lose their minds over what we're doing in this session over one bill, I can't imagine how they're going to handle the fact that we're about to give this government a giant enema.”

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Now, as much as some might not want to dwell on that particular metaphor from this particular minister, I want to stop and take it apart a little bit. The first thing that strikes me about this minister's metaphor about this government's budget and indeed about the pieces that we see contained here in Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, is the crudity, the fact that it is not only certainly crude in many ways, as folks noted on social media and certainly have commented on since – it was perhaps, some would say, in poor taste – but crude also just in the ignorant simplicity with which the minister chose to express himself and chose to express the idea about how we'd deal with what is, in fact, a challenging and complex reality.

Secondly, I would reflect on the cruelty of the minister's analogy. The manner in which the minister brought this forward and suggested this particular medical operation to aid in what he feels is a significant problem with the government is one of brute force. That goes back to the crudity but does also speak to sort of this government's general approach, which is to bully its way through, to force things from the top down or, perhaps in this analogy, from the bottom up. It is not a question of co-operative or thoughtful action. It's not a question of careful and considered. It's a question of simply imposing, forcing, and, some might say, attacking.

9:40

Lastly, what struck me about the analogy is its idiocy, Mr. Chair, simply in that what the minister was proposing is not a practical or reasonable solution to the actual problem. Now, admittedly, it's a short-term solution. Certainly, it's one that is going to yield very rapid and probably a lot of results but, frankly, utterly fails to address the actual underlying problem.

Of course, again, that's what we see with this government and with the kind of measures that they're putting forward here in Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, the sort of approach they are taking with, say, a system as complex as health care, which in itself is not unlike a living being in its complexity and all the different parts that have to work together to make that system work, a system that is indeed much greater than the sum of its parts. What we have here is the minister proposing a very flashy, incredibly messy, and very ill-thought-out solution to a problem that he's barely considered and understood.

Now, if we were to talk to any medical doctor about how they would want to help out a patient who is dealing with this kind of

situation, who is dealing with a chronic health issue like this, say, dealing with, shall we say, to not be quite as crude as the member, a chronic blockage. Any decent physician is going to sit down and actually talk with the patient, assess the problem. What are the root issues that led to the situation that the person finds themselves in? What are their eating habits? What are their sleeping habits? Is this individual getting much exercise? What's the environment they're living in? What are the other things they are experiencing? The doctor is not going to come in and, as the minister suggests, try to ramrod through a solution. They're going to actually sit down and consider and try to identify: how did we get into the condition that we are in now?

Now, admittedly, Mr. Chair, there are Conservatives who do this, who actually approach complex policy problems and complex systems of government and issues that need to be dealt with within a government system in a thoughtful way. Certainly, the more moderate, progressive, and thoughtful Conservatives do tend to do that. I have known and I have seen those individuals, and it's appreciated. But those of a more reactionary and ideological bent, when they approach these sorts of situations, always seem to fall into the temptation of trying to frame it as a moral judgment, as a failing of character: if only this individual had been more disciplined in their diet, if only they had exercised more, if only they weren't so lazy and unmotivated. Often the unsaid subtext is: if only they were more like me.

Now, Mr. Chair, to bring this all back around to what we are talking about here, Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, and indeed the proposal of a budget that this government has put forward and indeed its overall approach to how it wants to bring Alberta's fiscal house into order, the analogy that we saw from the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction in that the solution to this problem is “to give this government a giant enema” reveals much more of the ignorant thinking and much less of the thoughtful and considered. Indeed, you consider the great damage that could be done if you try to embark on your solutions in such a way from a medical or a political policy standpoint. You are more likely to do far greater harm than you are to do good or achieve your ends.

You're not achieving a long-term solution. You're not, in fact, actually altering anything about the habits that got you into that situation to begin with. Indeed, we've seen that with previous Conservative governments in Alberta that have come in preaching this kind of rhetoric about how they at long last were going to be the ones who were going to bring this fiscal order into this House. They were going to be the ones to finally reconfigure the health care system in a way that worked efficiently. They were going to be the saviours of Alberta.

Mr. Chair, here we are again, and we have no new ideas at the table. We have these same tired tropes, the same utter failure to actually address root issues, to consider the real problems. Rather than sit down and actually work with the individuals involved in these complex systems, with the people that make up the political body that is our government, the folks that are running our health care systems, all the other people that are part of this system here in the province of Alberta, to work to improve and change habits, to work to find better ways to do things to address what are the root issues that come with this – how did we get here? – no, their solution is to, in the words of the associate minister, “give this government a giant enema.”

That says it all to me right there, the lack of thought, the lack of consideration, the utter failure to understand the thoughtful and careful work that should go into this to bring our House, indeed, into better fiscal balance. And indeed – and I'm not one to dance on a grave, but it's unfortunate – we saw today what Moody's thinks of this government's plan so far. This credit downgrade that the province

received today indicates that with the solution that this government has brought forward, its \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway, its intention to ramrod through reform at lightning speed, to blast through its policy with a firehose, they aren't impressed. They see the fact that this government is on track to pretty much the same level of debt that it stands in this House and decries every day and judges our government for having had the moral failing to run towards – they're driving towards that exact same fiscal cliff, Mr. Chair.

Moody's is looking at the fact that this government, in fact, has a higher deficit this year than our government projected. Again, this is all part and parcel of Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, which is enacting measures to support that budget and this government's plan that is driving to over \$90 billion in debt.

The question is: who's going to pay? The question is: is the patient going to survive the procedure? Are we going to come out of this at the end of this government's first term with Alberta on a stronger footing in the sense that it has actually built a more resilient approach, a more resilient economy, better fiscal habits and looking after all Albertans as opposed to simply trying to rocket through reforms, make wild cuts in hopes that the elaborate shell game which this Premier and his ministers are choosing to play with funding will yield numbers that they can hide behind for the next provincial election.

What we see with Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, is exactly those sorts of ill-thought-out actions, not addressing actual systemic issues, not actually working with folks to move things forward. Instead, we see this government driving personal income taxes up, something which they did not campaign on, something on which they are one hundred per cent lacking in even telling a half-truth. We see them leading to higher property taxes in our municipalities. We see millions lost in the film and television industry, investments in jobs, as they have fumbled their initial introduction of the film tax credit. Indeed, we see more of the sort of moral judgment that this government likes to rain on everyone else while refusing to train it on themselves.

9:50

The Minister of Municipal Affairs having said that in this bill – as was noted by my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, there is a single line which breaks the promise this government made, yet another area where the UCP platform utterly misled Albertans, that they would respect the city charters that had been carefully negotiated and discussed with Edmonton and Calgary. That minister stood in this House and said that he had to do it, Mr. Chair, that he had no choice but to be utterly disingenuous, to utterly betray their campaign promise, that he was forced by our government.

What we see, Mr. Chair, is that, instead, this government is simply bent on running headlong into its own ideological judgment, its own reckless spending, its own debt. It's just simply choosing to put it somewhere else in the hope and the prayer that maybe someday that \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway might create a job. It hasn't yet. We'll wait with bated breath. In the meantime we've seen that what we are left with are these ill-thought-out measures cancelling tax credits that had brought Edmonton, in part, helped to bring Edmonton, to now being ranked as the 10th tech city in the world.

Now those credits are gone, part of this government's giant enema, courtesy of this Premier and his cabinet, just as a part of which now we've seen a thousand jobs that were flushed out of Calgary as this Premier is continuing to stoke isolationist rhetoric and create a fiscal environment that does not help the tech industry, creating an environment where people are not wanting to create jobs and, in fact, are not creating jobs.

I think I've had a lot to say on this bill. I've had a lot to say about the disingenuity of the government, the crudity of its methods, the top-down, dictatorial, condescending manner in which they're going about imposing their will on the province. I know we're nearing the end of this session and the passage of these bills. Well, this government will have the opportunity, I guess, to go forward and try to prove to Albertans that they are going to achieve what they said that they were going to achieve. So far I can say, Mr. Chair, that they have not convinced me. They have not convinced the folks in Moody's. I can tell you that, based on a lot of the actions they've taken this weekend, over the last couple of weeks – firing the Election Commissioner that was investigating them with no justification, jeopardizing thousands of jobs across the province for folks that are providing public front-line health care, driving out tech industries, all these things – there are a lot of Albertans that aren't convinced either.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to Bill 20? I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I'll move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader again.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you again, Mr. Chair. First off, in order to move to Bill 26, which is the plan, I move the following motion, that the committee rescind the motion to report progress on Bill 26 that happened before the supper hour.

[Motion carried]

Bill 26

Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019

The Deputy Chair: For the purposes of this, we will be dealing strictly with sections 1(3) and 2(2). Are there any comments or questions? We are currently on A1. I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have the opportunity – and I certainly want to thank my colleagues for giving me the opportunity – to rise to speak to this bill in committee and also to be able to rise and speak to this particular amendment that was put forward by I believe the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, who is also the Official Opposition labour critic.

This amendment proposes to change the provision in this bill that would remove the mandatory nature of workers' compensation coverage from the previous regime governing the employment circumstances of farm workers. What it would propose to do is suggest that, well, if you're going to remove the mandatory nature of workers' compensation for this particular subset of employees – because, of course, what we've learned here is that, really, this bill has removed workers' compensation and employment standards protection from the vast majority of workers employed in the task of providing agricultural services to farmers. But for that small group that remains that still has access to some form of compensatory coverage, they no longer by matter of right have access to workers' compensation. Instead, the employer, typically a much larger employer, can choose to forgo workers' compensation coverage and instead have some form of private disability provider.

We are proposing a relatively minor change here. Obviously, we wouldn't do any of this stuff. Let me begin by saying, of course, that I think it's a gross violation of human rights and general belief in the right of people to be able to care for themselves and/or their families should they be injured at work in what is without question a very unsafe and injury-prone occupation. Frankly, this decision to remove from these people the basic protection provided by workers' compensation is really quite cruel and very much dismissive of the well-being of a very large group of working people who are also, at the same time, amongst the most vulnerable in any employment sector in this province.

But that is the decision, that is the choice that these members have made, that they do not want to provide basic rights and protections for one of the most vulnerable groups of working people in this province. That is apparently not part of their value system. Therefore, we are very much limiting the group of people who might have any access, in fact, to these types of protections, and within that small group of people we are also removing their right to have access, particularly, to workers' compensation. Instead, their employer gets to choose between workers' compensation and private insurance. We would suggest, therefore, that if we are going to have this ridiculous situation, then at the very least – and that's what this amendment is geared towards – alternative private insurance be effectively equivalent to what that worker might receive were they eligible for workers' compensation.

10:00

Why should we do this? Now, as some folks in this House might know, one of the areas of law that I used to practise – you know, there's a larger area around labour relations and labour rights, but one subset of it was, of course, health and safety and workers' compensation and disability law, so I have a fair amount of knowledge in this area. People here will remember that it's certainly not difficult for me to go into a rather long debate over the shortcomings of workers' compensation, and indeed that was why our government worked very hard to improve some of the very unjust elements that existed within workers' compensation. The irony of all this is that what I can say is that nine times out of 10 workers' compensation actually provides better coverage than private insurance because, in fact, I have dealt with both regimes.

What is it that workers get if they are very – well, let me just back up a bit and let me just talk a little bit about, you know, what it's like on a farm and some of the kinds of hazards that people can be exposed to on a farm. You know, I grew up about six hours north of Edmonton. My very, very, very first job, that I did not last long in – I think it was at most two days – was working in a market garden when I was about 13, picking vegetables. To be quite fair, I was pretty wimpy, and after two days of picking these vegetables, I had sunstroke and sunburn and all the things and I was practically passing out and I whined incredibly to my parents.

So I moved on to my second ever summer job, which was working in a honey-making place and working with bees and scraping the wax and the honey off the frames as they came through. We worked in this little shed on what was essentially a farm. It was running around 40 degrees, and I spent the whole day running away from bees. As you can imagine, there were hundreds of thousands of bees in this building, and all I did was run around away from them. Needless to say, it wasn't my most successful day at work either. The third day or fourth day I actually moved on to waiting tables, and that actually took and I did that for the next few years. That being aside, I quickly learned that it's not hard to become ill or get injured when I was working in the market garden.

Now, at the same time, you know, I was pleased to be sort of a token member of one of my parents' closest family friends' family,

and they ran a ranch and a farm. It was a very big farm, very big ranch. I used to stay there sometimes for great lengths of time during the summer. The first time I learned to ride a horse, the first time that I learned to drive a vehicle I was about nine years old driving around the fields. I'm sure many people recall that. I remember, you know, jumping into haystacks, all that kind of good fun. I also remember going camping for the first time when I was about 10 years old and literally running back to the house being chased by a bear very late at night. A great place to grow up.

The fact of the matter is, though, that they were very good farmers, very, very responsible farmers, although right now it doesn't sound like they were the most responsible parents, but I feel it worked out well in the end. Nonetheless, the fabulous patriarch of the family, who was one of the most successful farmers, I would suggest, in the whole area, when he was in his, I think, early 70s had what happens to many farmers. You know, he was working a long day and tripped and got his foot caught in the auger and lost two-thirds of his foot and ultimately ended up being in the hospital for quite some time. It took some time before he was able to recover because, in fact, as a result of the surgery he ended up getting an inner-ear infection. It took him about two years before he could actually drive and ride horses again and do all that kind of stuff. To be clear, he loved riding horses because, in addition to farming and ranching, they also raised horses and they raced horses. He was an incredibly effective and talented rider, but it took him a couple of years before he could get back on a horse. Anyway, he eventually did.

He owned this place. He loved it. It was in his bones. He was born there, raised there, died there. In fact, in terms of dying there, ultimately, a few years later, actually, quite some years later – I guess he was pushing 90 at the time – he was out chasing cattle in his vehicle and was driving around the hills of the Peace River, the banks of the Peace River, and made a mistake in judgment, got too close to the edge, where it was too steep going down into the river valley, and lost control of the vehicle. It started careening from the top of the river valley down to the bottom. If anybody doesn't know the Peace River valley, it's about twice the size of the North Saskatchewan, so it's kind of a big drop. He hurled himself out of the truck and then walked six kilometres back to the farmhouse where they immediately took him to the hospital, where he stayed for the next several weeks before he ultimately died.

These are things that can happen on farms, whether you are the owner or whether you are the worker, whether you are one of the best farmers in the community and you have done it for 90 years or whether you are a temporary worker who's been brought up from Mexico to work during the harvest for five months. Let me be clear. There are lots and lots and lots and lots of folks who fall into that latter category. If you are injured, it matters what kind of compensation you have access to. The fellow that I was describing, at that point, I mean, as I said, they were very, very, very successful. They didn't have to worry about their income when he was not able to work anymore, but people who work and rely solely on a wage – and we'll talk in the next amendment about whether or not they actually get to have a wage – need every cent. If they are injured, they need compensation.

Workers' compensation provides, especially for lower income workers, which farm workers definitely are, essentially full wage replacement. They provide it for as long as the condition that has arisen from the injury requires active treatment. It could be something that lasts for two weeks, or it could be a form of compensation that lasts for four years. In the case of the person that I just described, this family friend who struggled, who had imbalance problems as a result of the surgery after he lost two-thirds of his foot, he actually was not back to a place of being fully

able to work again for over two years. Had he been receiving workers' compensation benefits, he would have had his income replaced, or if it was an employee that had had that problem instead of him, he would have had his income replaced throughout that whole time.

What else would he have gotten? Well, he would have gotten physiotherapy. He would have gotten, in some cases, accelerated health care. He would have gotten access to a whole wide range of rehabilitative service. He would have gotten access to counselling. Had it been that he was never actually able to go back to that type of work, he also would have gotten access to retraining and retraining options. In addition, if he'd been left with a permanent pension, he would have also ended up with a lump sum payment or an ongoing pension for the rest of his life. Had he not survived or had it been the second accident that I just described, if he had children either under the age of 18 or actively in postsecondary education, they would have received an orphans' benefit, and his wife or spouse or partner would have received a lifelong pension as a survivor. That's what would happen under worker's compensation.

10:10

Under private insurance, though, private insurance arrangements can involve as little as a one-time \$20,000 payout. They don't necessarily involve regularized income replacement. If they do, they do so at a highly, highly discounted rate. Moreover, they have arbitrary end dates regardless of whether the injury is still in play, whether there is still a disability. In many cases they don't have any kind of long-term impairment pension or long-term impairment payout. In addition, survivors or family don't have access to benefits should the person actually die, nor does the surviving spouse. They definitely never look at retraining or rehabilitation. They don't provide those things.

The question then arises: why? Why are we going to invite these vulnerable, low-paid workers who happen to work in one of the most unsafe occupations, statistically speaking – this is not a value judgment. This is just statistically speaking. Heaven forbid, look at the evidence. That's where the evidence is. One of the most unsafe occupations. Why would we have these vulnerable workers exempted from having the fulsome protection or quasi-fulsome protection, at least, the most fulsome protection available, anyway, offered by the WCB and allow employers or invite employers to replace it with what is a fraction of that amount of protection? Why? Why would you do that?

Now, I don't have to spend a lot of time asking why. It's very clear who folks in this government support and who they do not, who they think are second-class citizens and who they do not. It's very clear that those who are vulnerable, I think, basically from the perspective of those on the other side, are vulnerable for a reason and it's their fault and it's certainly not the job of anyone in government to stand up for them. In fact, it is part of a strategy to make them more vulnerable, and somehow that's going to create economic growth. I think most people would argue that that's a complete fallacy, and there's a plethora of evidence out there to suggest that really it is an antieconomic growth strategy. Really, it's just cruel and in many cases a breach of fundamental human rights.

Nonetheless, I can't speculate exactly why it is that members opposite would adopt this approach. I would, however, urge them to reconsider. I would urge them to, at the very least, for that small subset of farm workers that will still have access to this benefit because, of course, you are actually exempting the vast majority of farm workers from any of this. Of course, those folks will just get to go off and sue their employers, but in the meantime you will be exempting these farm workers from this kind of protection. I would

suggest that that does not help the economy, it does not help those workers, it does not help job creation, it does not help the overall quality of life of people in our communities, and it is a short-sighted and mean-spirited approach that can be easily remedied by accepting this amendment that was thoughtfully put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Mills Woods.

I would urge members opposite to consider supporting this thoughtful amendment put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods because to do otherwise would be to engage in an almost spiteful kind of attack on a very vulnerable group of workers for no apparent outcome other than to ensure that they or their families suffer more should they be so unlucky as to be injured on a farm. It is with that in mind that I would urge my colleagues in this Legislature to give second thought and to consider voting in favour of this amendment designed to provide greater protections to vulnerable farm workers here in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A1? Seeing none.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Deol	Hoffman	Phillips
Ganley	Irwin	Sabir
Goehring	Loyola	Shepherd
Gray	Notley	

10:30

Against the motion:

Allard	Kenney	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Reid
Copping	Loewen	Schow
Getson	Long	Shandro
Glubish	McIver	Smith
Goodridge	Nally	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Issik	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Jones	Panda	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 11	Against – 30

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving to Bill 26 proper with regard to sections 1(3) and 2(2), I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen to speak.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise in Committee of the Whole to speak to some of the aspects of Bill 26, a bill that I very strongly disagree with in certain key areas, so I will speak to that disagreement. I will start by talking briefly about the section around the fact that workers on 80 per cent of farms in Alberta will not have access to mandatory workers' compensation coverage, coverage that provides workers with not only assistance with their injury but compensation, medical aid when medical aid is needed, rehabilitation, and

economic loss payments, meaning that if someone is no longer able to earn a wage, it will be compensated to them.

We now have the data on that workers' compensation coverage for the past three years, as it has been mandatory here in Alberta, and we know that there have been a significant number of lost time claims, disabling injury claims throughout the province. In 2016 we had 415 disabling injury claims, in 2017 we had 441, and in 2018 we had 473. These were all instances where workers experienced significant injury, a disabling injury, and received compensation and help to get back to work. At the same time their employer was provided with a system that would help to get their worker whole and hardy and back to work again and also would make sure that there was not a private lawsuit that would potentially jeopardize their business operation or in many cases the family home, the family farm. That system, based on the agreement between employers and workers to make sure that there were no lawsuits but there was appropriate compensation, I think, is incredibly important.

One of the key concerns with Bill 26 is that it is deferring to regulation what type of private industry coverage could be granted to workers. We just debated and voted on an amendment that would have moved more clarity into the bill proper. Certainly, it is a strong concern to me that workers will not have the compensation that they deserve, workers that are working in an industry that statistically we know has greater injury rates and greater death rates than in other industries, and we consistently see that through the statistics that are released through the Alberta labour department. It's something that we often remark on when the day of mourning comes around and we remember the workers who have lost their lives, because there have been for the past many years a number of agricultural workers counted among those numbers.

I think it's really important that I stand and object to the change around insurance compensation and particularly the fact that in this bill it defers to regulation making sure that there's adequate protection not only for workers but also for employers. We will, when those regulations are completed and published, be looking to see that there are some important standards placed around that to make sure that workers who are injured as they're trying to provide for their family get compensation, get rehabilitation, that they so importantly deserve.

The other aspect is that through the workers' compensation system we've had data and reporting on injuries that before we didn't have an ideal way to track. WCB and occupational health and safety work with our medical professionals to try and track through admissions into hospitals and through other measures to get a sense of injury rates. Prior to the original change to bring the agricultural industry under workers' compensation, that data was spotty at best. Over the past three years we've actually got more information about the types of injuries, and that allows us to be more proactive and work with organizations like AgSafe, which is founded by 29 producer groups and is working to improve education and awareness. I certainly would encourage this government to continue to support the AgSafe coalition and continue to support improving health and safety in this important industry. I've started my remarks by talking about that workers' compensation piece.

I would now like to change tack and talk just a little bit about another section of the bill that essentially exempts entirely workers at 80 per cent of the farms in Alberta from minimum employment standards. Now, employment standards are those minimum rules and conditions for employment in Alberta. With the changes in Bill 26 workers at 80 per cent of the farms in our province will no longer have those minimum standards.

Now, where we had been at with employment standards is through the consultation process working with technical working

groups and consulting widely with Albertans looking to find that right balance between employment standards, regulations that apply widely throughout Alberta, and specifically in farming and ranching. In employment standards on farms and ranches there had been already a number of very special rules made that only applied to wage nonfamily workers. Hours of work and overtime did not apply, general holiday pay was specifically calculated, and importantly, rest periods were acknowledged, where employees were entitled to four days of rest for every 28 days of work.

Some of those accommodations I think were really important, but also with employment standards coverage workers in our agricultural fields could have job-protected leaves after 90 days of work. One of the things that Bill 26 does is it removes that job protection for leaves. I really want to flag that these are leaves that the workers themselves are paying into and are part of our federal employment insurance system. That includes everything from maternity leave and parental leave to critical illness of a child leave. We spoke quite a bit about the critical illness of a child leave when the job protection for that was originally brought in here in this province because Alberta did not have job protection as part of its employment standards.

That change was made in 2017, and we talked quite a bit about a young, single mother in Lethbridge who had a child diagnosed with cancer, went to take the federally provided critical illness of a child leave, something that she fully qualified for, but because employment standards protections providing job protection to that mother were not available in Alberta, because the employment standards legislation was 30 years old at that point, that young mother was fired from her job rather than having her job held. Please keep in mind that the leave she was asking for was completely unpaid on the part of the employer. She was simply asking to not lose her job while she cared for her critically ill child.

10:40

That exact scenario can now happen for workers in the agricultural field because now the minimum employment standards that protect minimum wage, unpaid job-protected leaves, vacation, vacation pay, payment of earnings – and I can tell you from my time as a minister in this province that a strong majority of employment standards complaints often end up being about wages, whether it be total nonpayment or just disputes around payment of wages. That workers on 80 per cent of farms in our province won't have access to employment standards to help resolve disputes, when there may be one that arises, I think is really unfortunate in this province.

I would note that the employment standards system is not a combative one. Generally speaking 81 per cent – 81 per cent – so 4 out of 5 times employment standards complaints are resolved voluntarily. Very rarely does it need to become an investigation or to become something that involves an employment standards officer contacting employers. But having that protection when a worker is not getting the compensation they deserve, particularly when the alternative is to then go through the court systems, when our justice systems, as I've understood the debate in this House, are not getting the resources that they need. How long will a worker need to wait for a paycheck that they are owed?

I think those basic protections are really important, and I really want to emphasize that the general trend around employment standards in the agricultural industry in Canada has been to improve and extend protections, not to take them away. Alberta is moving against the trend in Canada by now removing employment standards protections that are very important to so many families and give them access to people who will help enforce minimum standards and give them even just basic things like termination notice and termination pay. I will repeat again that employment

standards are minimum safety standards, and workers on 80 per cent of farms will no longer have that under Bill 26. I strongly object to that.

In light of that, I am going to move an amendment at this point, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I've taken a quick look at it. If you could please just read it quickly into the record and then continue with your statements.

Ms Gray: I move that Bill 26, Farm Freedom and Safety Act, 2019, be amended in section 2(2) by striking out clause (a). What this change does, for those who do not want to flip directly through Bill 26, is it simply continues the employment standards protections for wage, nonfamily workers on farms and ranches to be the same as what they are today, standards that acknowledge the unique nature of farms and ranches, standards that only apply in a few specific categories, which are minimum wage, job-protected leaves, vacation and vacation pay, payment of earnings, termination notice and termination pay, administration, and enforcement.

So a high-level summary: these workers would continue to have the ability to contact employment standards when there is a dispute with their employer, to access voluntary resolution but also potentially more support when needed to make sure that wages owed to them would be paid. It also brings them back to having that minimum wage to make sure that they are paid at the very least \$15 per hour or \$13 per hour if they are a student, under the changes this government has brought in.

I would at this point conclude my remarks and simply urge all members to support this amendment that simply seeks to provide minimum employment standards protections that acknowledge the uniqueness of farms and ranches back to the workers at 80 per cent of the farms and ranches in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members who wish to speak to this amendment? Just for clarity, we will be referring to this amendment as A2. The hon. Official Opposition leader.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm again pleased to be able to rise to speak to this amendment. Let me begin by thanking the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for bringing in this thoughtful amendment. It's more than thoughtful. It is critical. It's life saving. It is ensuring that Alberta maintains the kind of basic human rights you would expect to see in any democratic country anywhere. It is an effort to stop a disingenuous rollback of rights to far, far, far lower rights than we saw before our government brought in Bill 6 in late 2015.

Let me just start with that. I mean, absolutely, the members opposite ran on the platform of reversing the changes that we made through Bill 6 back in late 2015. Now, I actually think that it was an incredibly backward and thoughtless decision to run on this particular plan because, of course, even though there was, without question, a great deal of uproar over our introduction of Bill 6, our government worked diligently and, I would argue, responsibly and very pragmatically with a broad range of stakeholders within the agricultural sector in order to accommodate the unique business and operational needs of farmers while still ensuring that Alberta workers would take their rightful place alongside other farm workers throughout the rest of the country as being, well, you know, humans who were entitled to the basic rights that generally humans are typically entitled to. It seemed like an unnecessary rush to undo all that we had managed to accomplish in terms of accommodating the needs of farmers while at the same time protecting a profoundly

vulnerable group of workers. Nonetheless, that's what they chose to run on, so when we saw this Bill 26 come forward as an act to undo all that we had done to protect those farm workers, we were not surprised.

We were surprised, though, when we really dug into it. Of course, it took us a little bit more time to dig into it because we were not afforded the typical privilege of getting briefed. When we were finally able to dig into it, we discovered that this bill actually goes much further than simply taking us back to pre Bill 6 times. In the past although workers in the agricultural sector did not have health and safety protection – and to be fair, they still, I think, retain that health and safety protection, so that is a good thing – they had the protection of very, very, very basic employee rights prior to Bill 6. They didn't have the protections around most hours of work rights. They didn't get overtime. They didn't get holidays. They didn't get much termination pay. They didn't get any of those kinds of things, but they did have the fundamental right to be paid for their work. Now that doesn't exist anymore. So that is quite a step backward.

10:50

I understand from the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods that it has been suggested that this simply maps onto the New Brunswick regime. Well, we've taken the time to look at the New Brunswick regime, and let me just say that it does not map onto the New Brunswick regime. Interestingly, in a discussion paper published by the New Brunswick ministry of labour in 2016, they described the situation that they had there, and they said that they had this very strange situation where they were exempting small farms, much in the same way that this minister is trying to do, but it was a smaller group. Rather than five or fewer employees that are employed for longer than six months, it was three or fewer employees who are employed for longer than six months. They said, you know, that the strange thing about this is that here we have these, quote, unquote, long-term employees, i.e. the employees who were employed for six months or longer, who are exempted from the New Brunswick employment standards code even while the shorter term employees, the harvesters, enjoyed the benefits of the coverage. They said: this is a very strange thing, and we should fix this; we don't understand why this is the case. But that is the way their legislation was interpreted.

Anyway, what that shows is that it is a very different situation here. The way this bill has been constructed by the drafters is that it exempts the employees themselves from any coverage at all from the Employment Standards Code, which means not just those employees with six or more months of service but any employees who work for that employer are exempted now from coverage under the Employment Standards Code. So if you're taking the seasonal employees and saying that they don't get the benefit of the Employment Standards Code and that those with five or fewer employees don't get the benefit of the Employment Standards Code, we're now basically exempting the vast majority of agricultural workers from the Employment Standards Code.

In the past what had happened is that they had their own specific regulations, which ensured that at the very least they got paid wages and were covered by the minimum wage. When they worked an hour; they got paid an hour. Those kinds of things. But the way this is structured is that we've excluded them completely from the application of the Employment Standards Code, which means, of course, that the minister of labour, should he at some point sit down and realize that he honestly didn't mean to create a slave class in Alberta and try to pass regulations to provide some level of protection, he does not have the legislative authority to pass those regulations anymore because he has statutorily prevented himself from passing those regulations.

What we were trying to do was stop them from making this mistake. You know, we took some time, we talked to folks. We said: really, you seriously don't even want to give yourselves the opportunity to pass regulations that say, "Yeah, it's okay. You've got to work longer hours, and you don't get overtime; you don't get days off; harvest days are intense, blah, blah, blah, all those things. But we still expect that you're going to get paid." What's happened now as a result of this is: no right to get paid, nothing whatsoever.

Then I called a few lawyers, including some experts in this out in Ontario, and I said, "Well, what happens in common law in Canada? Like, if they are simply at the whim of the common law, will the common law read in the minimum wage as sort of a given that that has to be part of the contract?" And the lawyer said: well, you know, it's been a long time since this structure has been in place, so we don't really know, but the fundamentals of the common law are that there has to be demonstration of a contract having been put in place, and the contract means that both sides have to understand what they've agreed to, and in most cases it's helpful that it be in writing.

However, since a lot of these folks who are seasonal employees often come here, actually, from Mexico and other parts of Central America to work on farms – anyone who does farming knows that that's where many of these seasonal employees are coming from – they often don't speak English well enough and don't necessarily read English well enough to be able to determine whether there's an actual meeting of the minds in terms of the contract. So it is actually very possible for a person, upon discovering that they haven't been paid and that they're never going to be paid and that they had no right to be paid, if they try to sue in court, the court will say: well, did you have a written contract; did you have a common understanding? More likely than not, they'll be relying on casual verbal conversations, and they won't be able to prove their case. This, of course, assumes that you've got someone with the wherewithal to actually hire a lawyer and go to small claims court and try to make their case.

Now, of course, you would think that some things might protect those workers, like, you know, that the employer has to keep a record of the fact that they made these people work for X or Y numbers of hours a day, a week, a month. Well, nope. No, they don't. They used to have to under the Employment Standards Code, but they sure don't anymore.

Now, there used to be regulations that provided for a minimum amount of deductions from people's paycheques for room and board. Nope, those don't apply anymore.

There used to be regulations we had actually put in place after much conversation and accommodation and discussion and negotiation with a broad range of farmers. There used to be rules that said that for every 28 days a farm worker must get four days off. They could get it all together; they could get one day off a week, you know, whatever. It doesn't have to be specific. The farmer can pick and choose. They could, you know, hopefully, use that day on a bad weather day or whatever, but there had to be four days off in 28 days. That, of course, doesn't apply anymore.

In fact, what can happen now is that you can get some poor fellow coming from Mexico or some other part of Central America to a farm, have it arranged, a friend through a friend, verbally, maybe in English or maybe not, nothing in writing. They show up. They stay in the bunkhouse. We all know what bunkhouses look like. Anyone who's ever been on a farm knows about the bunkhouses. They stay in the bunkhouse. They get food provided by their boss. They work 50 consecutive 12-hour days, and at a certain point they go: hmm, 50 consecutive 12-hours days; shouldn't I get paid? Well, in the Employment Standards Code there would be a rule that says that

every now and then the employer has got to pay you. That doesn't apply anymore. Anyway, they're told: sorry; no rules there.

So they worked 50 consecutive days, 12 hours a day, no day off – they have no right to that – they're likely living in some rundown, very possibly mouse-infested bunkhouse, getting food a couple of times a day. Then at the end of that – and they've worked whatever 50 times 12 is; is that over 6,000 hours? – they've worked those hours, they go to get paid, and the boss says: "Well, we would pay you, but your room and board actually costs a fair amount. We were only ever going to pay you \$3 an hour because there's absolutely nothing in the law anymore to prevent us from deciding to only pay you \$3 an hour." There was, but there isn't anymore thanks to this bill. That's what you're doing. Don't look at me like that because that's what this bill is doing, guys over there. That's exactly what you are doing. You have removed the right of these people to be paid a minimum wage. You have given . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, it's my understanding that . . . [interjection] Through the chair, please, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Through the chair, I would suggest to anyone who is skeptical about what I'm suggesting: you should read your legislation very carefully because that's exactly what it says.

The boss says: "You can get paid \$3, \$4 an hour, but it turns out that your room and board costs that much. So you're not going to get the \$3 an hour for the 6,000 hours you worked, but what we will do is that we'll write you a cheque for \$800 because that's what's left, but we'll throw that in the mail to you. Give us your address in Mexico." You know what? There is absolutely nothing that this very vulnerable worker can do about that, and there is no place they can go to complain about that. They're not allowed to talk to employment standards officers because that's been exempted.

We have literally invited the opportunity for workers to be historically exploited just in this province. This scenario will only be legal in Alberta. It absolutely astounds me that the members opposite think that's okay. You know, literally, folks, I'm not here making this stuff up. I would rather have just said: "Oh, yeah. Okay. We got rid of Bill 6. I guess that's unfortunate. We'll talk about it a bit, and then we'll carry on because that's what they ran on, you know. What are you going to do?" But, no, we have to talk about this. It is jaw-dropping to me that folks over there would quietly look at their phones and ignore this conversation and be okay with the fact that we are constructing a legal regime within which the scenario I just described is absolutely permissible. It is shameful. Interesting.

11:00

Now, what are some of the other things that these workers have no access to? Well, as we've already talked about, it's the minimum wage. We've already talked about rest periods. Obviously, there is no access to maternity leave or parental leave, reservist leave, no compassionate care leave, no bereavement leave, no domestic violence leave, no citizenship ceremony leave – that's ironic – no critical illness of a child leave, no long-term illness or any injury leave, no personal and family responsibility leave, no death or disappearance of a child leave, also no vacation, no vacation pay. I've already talked about how they have no right to a payment of earnings and no right to have the employer keep employment records. They, of course, have no right to get notice when they are terminated. They have no right to termination pay. They have no right to have rules around what is deducted from their earnings limited. They have no right to process or file complaints. There are no rules for work for individuals under 18 years old. Yeah, those are the highlights of what we have decided that this particularly

vulnerable group of workers are not entitled to be protected around. That is what we've done.

Interestingly, when I raised this in question period last week, the Premier rose and with great moral outrage suggested that I was attacking the personal integrity of every farmer in Alberta by suggesting that maybe it might be important to have rules in place that would provide for basic – basic – human rights protections for these workers. Just to be clear, the things I just outlined are identified in the UN international human rights code, that is expected of any country. Just to be clear, there will be a complaint filed against this government when this bill passes. We'll be filing it. Notwithstanding that, the Premier thought that I was being offensive and insulting to farmers by suggesting that they needed laws in place to avoid these kinds of fundamental breaches of human rights.

Now, let's just work through the logic of that little piece of brilliance, Mr. Chair. If that is the case, one would argue that anybody here that suggests we should have speed limits in school zones is attacking the fundamental integrity of every single person that drives a car, because we should know that they can be trusted to drive safely through a school zone. Or, if we were to suggest that there should be rules to prevent people from drinking and driving, well, then, we are fundamentally attacking the individual, personal integrity of every person that ever picks up a drink, myself included because, you know, I happen to like to enjoy a drink. Apparently, by suggesting that we have rules that prevent people from drinking and driving, that would be a fundamental attack on my integrity according to the incredible intellectualized logic track of the Premier. Let me suggest that the Premier maybe needs to think through his arguments a little teeny bit longer, because that is the most ridiculous argument I have ever heard.

Now, it has also been suggested in previous conversations around the minimum wage and exemptions to the minimum wage for children – that's where we decided that we would go from \$15 an hour to \$13.25 an hour for children who are working. The minister of labour suggested that by reducing wages by \$1.75, we were going to be creating jobs for children. Now, I again take issue with that logic. I'm wondering if the thought here is that by violating international standards of basic human rights, we are hoping to create jobs for those people who are seeking jobs in the international standard of human rights exempt field, because I know that there are lots of people out there begging to get work here in Canada in a setting that violates their basic rights.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I really appreciate the new components and arguments that have been raised by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, who obviously has a passion for protecting workers' rights, not only a passion but a skill set. Having been a labour lawyer, I think she has much to add to this bill around its constitutionality as well as the ethics around it. I'd ask that the member continue with her analysis and proposals.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to perhaps continue? I see the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for that intervening speaker.

Ms Notley: Yeah. Thank you, hon. member. I did have just a couple more things to say. We'll see how long. Anyway, I won't go on for too much longer. I really just do want to highlight this issue as well, about how we really are talking about vulnerable workers. There

has been a long-standing tradition of temporary agricultural workers from other countries coming to Alberta for short periods of time to work on our farms and our ranches and who then go back home, and that is fine. I know of many wonderful relationships that have developed between farmers and ranchers and folks that worked for them from other countries that, you know, spanned decades as they visited back and forth and all that kind of stuff, so I know that those arrangements happen.

But, to me, the idea that we would show our face in any kind of international setting or, frankly, national setting and say, "Yes, we are a place where people can come to work and get paid \$3 an hour or \$1 an hour or never" and that that's okay because we think that's what's necessary for our farming community to be able to survive and that Alberta farmers are so vulnerable that they simply cannot uphold the same standards as farmers in every other part of the country – I don't know. Like, to me, that's not a selling point to the rest of the world or the rest of the country for why Alberta should be considered an economic engine of the country or anywhere else. Frankly, what we would end up being considered is an economic exploiter. Quite frankly, I think most farmers would be embarrassed that this government thinks that the only way they can survive is to break ILO, international human rights, and United Nations laws. I actually think our farmers are quite capable of competing and being successful while also paying people that they ask to work for them.

I just do want to talk a little bit, though, about this because it is not just something we're talking about for rhetorical flair or anything like that. I mean, this is a true experience. You know, way back in the day, when living in Toronto, I had the opportunity to work with a number of different groups of temporary foreign workers who were working in a number of different sectors, including in the agriculture sector in Ontario. This was back in the late '80s. The depth and breadth of the suffering that was imposed upon these people, the amount of abuse they were expected to tolerate, the challenges that their families were expected to just suffer through were things that opened my eyes in a way that they never had been before. Honestly, as a young law student in the late '80s I was shocked at the conditions and the working conditions that we would allow to exist in sweatshops in some of the poorest parts of downtown Toronto as well as in some of the farming settings outside of Toronto at that time. I became involved then and never stopped working around groups that were developed and grew out of the desire to fight for the most basic of human rights and employment rights for these vulnerable workers.

11:10

It really saddens me today that we are talking about moving forward on a bill that would give Canada such a black eye, such a step backwards, such an exploitive record. This isn't about righting the so-called imbalance between unions and employers. I mean, that's a whole other story and a whole other debate. This is not about that conversation within a window of prosperity where we disagree about who gets more and who gets less. This is about a window that is much bigger, where you have basic, fundamental rights to be paid for your work or you do not have basic, fundamental rights to be paid for your work.

I was cautioned, the last time I talked about this, about getting too hot and using inflammatory language to describe a situation where we intentionally, statutorily, institutionally, through the levers of this government, enable a situation where people will work and will have no right to be paid and will be brought to a country and then led along with promises of fairness, only to discover that they have been exploited and that they have no recourse. Here in Alberta we are going to say that that's the way

things work because some people just aren't good enough to deserve a fundamental wage.

It's a very sad day that that's what this province is. No other province in the country, Mr. Chair. No other province in the country. Everywhere people deserve a basic wage for their work. Most places they deserve something called a minimum wage. Typically efforts are taken to exempt people and provide a lower minimum wage if you feel like attacking the youth, women, whatever, but never have I seen us completely eliminate the right to a minimum wage at all. Because of the structure that the drafters have adopted in writing this bill, that's exactly what this government is intentionally doing, breaching the ILO convention, setting itself up for complaints to the United Nations, fundamentally undercutting the rights of the most vulnerable Albertans and the most vulnerable people working here in this province of Alberta. Let me tell you that Alberta farmers don't need any government to do that for them. They are more than capable of doing what is right to be successful in their businesses, and it's, quite frankly, insulting to them and anyone else to think that that's what they need. It's insulting to all Albertans that we have this black mark, this legislative, statutory black mark, on our record.

The way to avoid that is to pass this amendment. Pass this amendment, include those workers, and then if you want to undercut them and exempt them from certain parts of the Employment Standards Code, write the regulation to do that and make it clear. But maintain basic rights. Maintain the right to be paid. Retain the right to be paid a minimum wage. Retain the right to collect your pay if you are not paid. These are such fundamental, basic rights. Pass this resolution, and then write a regulation to address whatever you feel you need to do. Do not vote down this amendment and block your ability to fix this problem.

I hope members opposite will consider doing something that is remotely akin to trying to protect Alberta from what will otherwise be pretty much one of the saddest days as it relates to human rights in the history of this province in about the last five or six decades.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A2? I see that the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration has risen to speak on this matter.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to speak briefly to this amendment on behalf of my colleague Minister Dreeshen. I want to speak a little bit to a background of why we're making this change concerning the farm freedom act. You know, this is a promise that we made.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you right at the start. However, I think that it would be probably better to refer to the hon. member in question who you were referring to as the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Copping: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

The Deputy Chair: Yes. Thank you.

Mr. Copping: My apologies. Thank you for the correction.

By background, why are we making this change in the farm freedom act? Quite simply, Mr. Chair, this is a promise that we made. When the previous government passed Bill 6, it imposed additional costs, rules, and regulations on farmers – rules and regulations that they had before – and made it more difficult for them to run their operations. Further, farmers and ranchers were outraged. I understand that there were protests on the front of the

Legislature, days and weeks of protests, concerns about Bill 6 imposing costs making it difficult for farmers moving forward.

Mr. Chair, you know, I'm a city boy from Calgary-Varsity, but I did grow up on a ranch outside Water Valley, Alberta. I understand ranching. You need significant flexibility because the cows don't drop the calves between 9 and 5. That happens at 3 in the morning, 4 in the morning. They need you to be able to actually do the work. This type of work also is where family members help each other, neighbours help each other, and you need flexibility to actually get the work done.

The farmers and ranchers were outraged when Bill 6 was passed. It wasn't necessary. Farmers and ranchers do not, as suggested by members opposite, exploit their workers. In fairness to the members opposite, although they made some changes, this anger remained. We heard it loud and clear prior to the election, so we made a commitment in the farm freedom act to address this issue. We made a commitment that we would repeal Bill 6, that we would require employers to maintain workplace insurance for farm workers but give them choice, either WCB or some type of private insurance, that we would ensure basic safety standards, and that we would exempt small farms from employment legislation, following the example of New Brunswick.

In addition, we made a commitment, Mr. Chair, that we would immediately launch comprehensive consultations. My colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry did exactly that. Over the summer he held consultations across the entire province, spoke to thousands of ranchers, farm workers, and farmers. He listened, and from that he created Bill 26 to address the issues, the additional red tape, while at the same time maintaining safety for farm workers. We lived up to those commitments, ensured basic safety standards. That's here in the bill. We reduce some of the red tape in regard to the application of the code, but the act remains, and there's a commitment to safety. We are maintaining our commitments in terms of providing choice and specifically exempting small farms from employment legislation following the New Brunswick example.

In New Brunswick, just so we're crystal clear, the legislation is very clear. It exempts all small farms and ranches from all employment standards. The members opposite suggest somehow – and they point to the minimum wage provision, for example, – that this is unconscionable, that this is done nowhere else in Canada. Mr. Chair, that is simply not the case. In Saskatchewan minimum wage doesn't apply. In Ontario minimum wage doesn't apply. Then, as we already talked about, in New Brunswick minimum wage doesn't apply.

Does that mean that farm workers there are being paid \$1 an hour? No, Mr. Chair. That's simply not the case. That's not what it means. We made a commitment to farmers and ranchers that we would provide flexibility. As the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry says, "No one cares more about farm workers than farmers" and ranchers. On the small farms they're like family. They work together, ensure that they have safety. Given that that is the commitment that we made, given that that was what was demanded by farmers and ranchers, and given that they are not exploiting their workers, quite frankly, I suggest that we reject this amendment.

Thank you.

11:20

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition has risen to speak on this amendment.

Ms Notley: Just a couple of quick points. As I said before, we absolutely acknowledge that the members opposite ran on repealing

Bill 6. We are opposed to it, but we understand that's what was going to happen. The structure of this legislation does more than repeal Bill 6, as I've said.

The member opposite talked about the debacle and the misery of all the demonstrations that occurred at the end of 2015 around Bill 6. It is true. That is true. That is why we spent two years trying to respond to them as opposed to putting up signs in our window telling them that we don't care about what they have to say, as was done by this government to demonstrators, demonstrations that were 10 times the size of the demonstrations he described.

He talked about flexibility. We understand the need for flexibility. We actually adjusted things in order to put in flexibility. I was just now even talking about other ways to provide even more flexibility. Nobody is negating the issue of flexibility.

What we are debating is the issue that there is no right to a minimum wage. I have documents here that say that through other regulations every other province actually provides minimum wage. Because of the way you've structured this legislation, you don't have the regulatory authority to provide for minimum wage, so we will be the only province with no minimum wage. I don't know how many times we can describe that.

We talk about and the member opposite has talked about allowing families and neighbours to work. That would still happen. That happened under Bill 6, quite frankly, and that could still happen. This is not about that. This is about those people who are working as employees typically coming in from other countries.

Finally, the member opposite talked about how the application of the Employment Standards Code is a form of red tape that needs to be eliminated. I am sorry, Mr. Chair. The obligation to pay people a wage for work: if that's what you call red tape, then I think that most Albertans would agree that that whole ministry should be eliminated. That's not red tape. That's human rights. If that's what red tape means to you folks, then I think we need to really reconsider that whole ministry.

That is my response. I am aware of what exists, but what I am saying is that even though other jurisdictions provide great, great levels of flexibility and different sets of rules, they have given themselves the regulatory authority to ensure that minimum wage applies. This removes that regulatory authority from the government. Then it is very clear on the record that there is no minimum wage unless you fix this, which is what we are proposing. If you pass this amendment, you would still have the regulatory authority to exempt everybody exactly the way you want to but still ensure that they have to get paid a wage. It would be shocking that you wouldn't take steps to ensure that that was the case.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, on amendment A2 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:24 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Deol	Hoffman	Phillips
Ganley	Irwin	Sabir

Goehring	Loyola	Shepherd
Gray	Notley	

Against the motion:

Allard	Kenney	Pon
Amery	LaGrange	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Schow
Copping	Long	Shandro
Getson	McIver	Smith
Glubish	Nally	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yaseen
Jones		

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving back to the bill proper, Bill 26, are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill at this time regarding sections 1(3) and 2(2)?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report sections 1(3) and 2(2) of Bill 26 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:30 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For:

Allard	Kenney	Pon
Amery	LaGrange	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loewen	Schow
Copping	Long	Shandro
Getson	McIver	Smith
Glubish	Nally	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yaseen
Jones		

Against:

Deol	Hoffman	Phillips
Ganley	Irwin	Sabir
Goehring	Loyola	Shepherd
Gray	Notley	

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 11
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[Request to report sections 1(3) and 2(2) of Bill 26 carried]

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 26 and report progress on bills 20 and 21.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I will now call on the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills and certain sections

of Bill 26. The committee reports the following sections: sections 1(3) and 2(2) of Bill 26. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 20 and Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members for another good evening of work. I would move that we adjourn the Assembly till tomorrow, Wednesday, December 4, at 9 o'clock a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:36 p.m.]

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