



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, July 15, 2020

Day 45

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Select Special Public Health Act Review Committee

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Please be seated.

Members' Statements

AFL President's Remarks on Bill 32

Ms Issik: Mr. Speaker, as most members of this House will know, my riding of Calgary-Glenmore is home to a large part of Calgary's Jewish community, and I feel that when members of the Jewish community are expressing their concerns about offensive comments made in Alberta politics, I must amplify those concerns. As my colleague pointed out yesterday, the comments made by NDP board member and Alberta Federation of Labour president Gil McGowan comparing the government of Alberta to Hitler's murderous Nazi regime were extremely offensive to Alberta's Jewish community and Albertans across the province.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague told this House that B'nai Brith Canada wanted an apology from this NDP activist and about concerns expressed by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. I also want to add that the Jewish Federation of Calgary has also expressed their concern with McGowan's comments. These comments were personally offensive to many Jewish Calgarians who are my constituents. Unfortunately, when asked by media yesterday about McGowan's comments, the NDP said that they were, quote, too busy. This dismissive attitude toward the comments and demands for the NDP to disassociate from McGowan are offensive and troubling.

The NDP should take this matter seriously. Unfortunately, however, past behaviour from the NDP suggests that they won't. In 2014 the NDP Member for Edmonton-North West called for the government to politically interfere in AIMCo for the purpose of affecting divestment and to boycott the state of Israel. Mr. Speaker, I won't assume ill intent on the part of the hon. member, but this sounds to many like he was supporting the boycott, divestment, and sanctions, BDS, movement, which is widely considered to be anti-Semitic. To my knowledge, the member never apologized.

Mr. Speaker, we all need to stand with the Jewish community. I know members on this side of the House do, and we need to see the NDP follow by condemning these comments.

Thank you.

Racist Incident at Edmonton's Al Rashid Mosque

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, once again this week the Al Rashid mosque was the target of racist graffiti. I say "once again" because the mosque has been targeted multiple times in recent months. The Al Rashid mosque, the first built in Canada, is a community hub and a refuge for the members of the community, who are already facing increased levels of discrimination and hate.

Mr. Speaker, north Edmonton is a diverse community of individuals of many faiths and ethnicities. It is a community that supports each other. These repeated incidents are bringing community members together to stand against the hate, and this can drown out the voices and actions of those who aim to divide with messages of hate and intolerance.

But, Mr. Speaker, the members of this community and all Albertans need this government to actually have their backs. However, all anyone has received are platitudes and words. We need action to combat racism. This was an act of racism. While this government talks about intolerance and antiracism, they fail to take action. They intentionally delayed the work of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council. They refused to reprimand people in their inner circle for racist comments and actions. They have yet to fire the Premier's racist, Islamophobic speech writer. They refused a debate on taking immediate action to combat racism.

What this does, this lack of action, is embolden those in the community with racist views. It sends a message that this government condones their acts of hate because the government isn't actually taking any action to indicate otherwise. We only need to look south of the border to see what lack of action against racism can look like.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is better than that. Let's remember that our culture gave birth to the first mosque in Canada. Let's acknowledge that the diversity of the province is a part of the unique heritage of Alberta, and let's all agree that that is worth acting to preserve.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose has a statement.

Transportation Infrastructure Capital Funding

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has been committed to providing communities with the resources needed for continuing development of infrastructure projects across our province. In November 2019 municipalities were able to apply for the strategic transportation infrastructure program funding for projects that develop and maintain local transportation and infrastructure across Alberta.

Just a few weeks ago, on June 26, I was pleased to make the Camrose Airport announcement of nearly \$1.7 million in funding from our government to be put towards the Camrose runway overlay project. The project consists of overlaying the main runway as well as the main taxiway leading to the terminal building. This project is critical to increasing safety for air traffic taking off and landing. I would like to take a moment and thank Wayne Steel for his hard work over the last 44 years in the industry and as manager of the Camrose Airport and for his advocacy for the continued development of the airport.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the recent grants that the city of Camrose, the town of Daysland, and the village of Ryley have received for water infrastructure. These grants amount to over \$13.5 million and will provide critical improvements to water supply and treatment facilities as well as upgrades to waste-water services, resulting in the creation of over 150 jobs in our constituency. I want to express my gratitude to the Minister of Transportation for his hard work and commitment to Albertans, and I look forward to his continued advocacy on the Transportation file.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Local Elections

Member Ceci: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this government has chosen to radically reform Alberta's local election laws, but I'm trying to find out who these changes are for. I've been contacted by local officials and concerned Albertans fearful of the damage this government will cause with these changes. Bill 29 removes the \$4,000 aggregate donations cap. Bill 29 removes this cap and allows an individual to donate up to \$10,000: \$5,000 before polling day and then \$5,000 after the election to help pay off a candidate's debt. In the next Edmonton election, for example, a wealthy individual could spend \$120,000 to run a full slate of city councillors. Who asked for this change? The vast majority of Albertans don't have \$4,000 to contribute to municipal elections, never mind \$100,000. A candidate in a smaller city like Grande Prairie used to be able to run a successful campaign on \$5,000. Now they will have to compete against those that are in the pockets of wealthy donors.

Bill 29 also removes the requirement for candidates to disclose their donors before election day. Again, Mr. Speaker, who asked for these changes? Who wants more money influencing our elections and less transparency? Not the Albertans I talk to.

The government is trying to muddy the waters with Bill 26 and Bill 27 by allowing Senate elections and referendums to run alongside local elections. Again, this isn't something that local officials asked for. AUMA members voted 95 per cent in opposition to having Senate elections and provincial-issue referendums on the same ballot as their local elections. Again, Mr. Speaker, who's asking for these changes?

These changes are not for Albertans. They are for the wealthiest individuals with special interests. The UCP promised to get big money out of politics, but this is just another broken promise. I guess we're going to have to wait until October 18, 2021, to see who has benefited from Bill 29: our Premier or Albertans and the successful candidates they elected to represent them.

Economic Recovery Plan

Mr. Schow: Sick of the attacks on our jobs, our farmers, and our way of life, Albertans sent a clear message and elected our government to restore the Alberta advantage and undo the catastrophic mishandling of our economy by the accidental NDP government and their debt, deficits, downgrades, and downright dumb decisions. Our government immediately repealed the NDP carbon tax, introduced a job-creation tax cut, and embarked on a path of recovery.

Mr. Speaker, 50,000 jobs will be created through Alberta's relaunch plan, a record \$10 billion investment in our future. This plan will help grow Alberta's industries, improve our infrastructure, and get Albertans back to work. When the angry NDP held government, they put Albertans out of work with their socialist ideals and launched an all-out assault on our ag sector with Bill 6. Shame. I'm proud that our government is doing the exact opposite.

1:40

Alberta's recovery plan makes targeted investments, based on common sense, that put Albertans first. It benefits all Albertans and increases investments in shovel-ready projects for municipalities across Alberta. Through the strategic transportation infrastructure program millions of dollars will be invested across Alberta, including in my constituency, to repair and replace four bridges, creating jobs and boosting the local economy. The recovery plan will also greatly assist our agriculture industry. The plan will

expand our irrigation infrastructure, grow our value-added processing, and increase our access to export markets.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP raised taxes, but we're lowering them. The NDP relentlessly attacked our agriculture sector, but we're standing up for them. And while the NDP focused on killing jobs, we're working day in and day out to get Albertans back to work. Albertans have spoken loud and clear, and unlike the previous government, we're listening and actually getting the job done.

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

UFCW Advocacy for Meat-packing Plant Workers

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes it is easy to see who has the backs of workers and who does not. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic UFCW, the union representing Alberta's meat-packing workers, stood up for the workers of meat-packing plants such as Cargill and JBS. While the minister and the CEOs of meat plants were only focused on keeping the plants open, publicly discounting the risk of infection to workers and their families, UFCW fought every day to shine a light on the unacceptable conditions in Alberta's meat-packing plants.

All over North America meat plants were shut down but not in Alberta. The minister and the Premier refused to take any action or to meaningfully engage with UFCW even though it became more obvious by the day how valid their concerns were. The minister was happy to have all food supply chain workers declared essential but refused to take the necessary action to protect meat-packing workers. He stood idly by, proclaiming everything was fine. The UFCW organized telephone town halls to hear workers' concerns and worked hard to protect the workers in the plants. Who could forget the minister declaring that the meat plant was 100 per cent safe and that it was only the opposition lying about the conditions in the meat plants, only for the plant to be shut down just days later? Everyone in the supply chain, from the ranch hands to the feedlot labourers to the processing plant employees, played vitally important roles in bringing top-quality food to our tables. Every one of them has a right to work in a safe and healthy environment.

I would like to thank the UFCW for their advocacy on this important issue and having the backs of workers when neither the government nor their employers would. Let us hope that in the future the government will respectfully invite union representatives to the table and to first focus on the protection of human life rather than the production of hamburger.

The Speaker: I may have missed exactly who you accused of lying in your member's statement, but if you did accuse the minister – and I'm not suggesting that you did because I didn't quite hear it – then that would be unparliamentary, and even though it's in a member's statement, we still are unable to use unparliamentary language. I'll be more than happy to review the Blues at a later point and address the situation if it is required.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Local Businesses

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago our government released our ambitious economic recovery plan in response to the COVID-19 induced downturn and collapsing oil prices. The Alberta recovery plan builds on our strengths with timely, targeted investments and bold policy reforms that will create jobs, make Alberta more competitive in the long term, and immediately show global investors that we mean business.

An important part of this recovery plan is supporting our local small businesses, who are some of our largest job creators. Local businesses are the backbone of our economy. One small thing that each and every one of us can do to help boost our economy is to support our local businesses. Many of these local businesses have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and could use a little bit of extra love right now.

I, for one, love supporting local businesses, especially those in my riding of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, and I know how important these businesses are to our communities. I had the unique privilege of growing up in a small-business family, and through that I came to understand first-hand not only how many sacrifices small-business owners make but also the contributions that they make to our communities by sponsoring our local sports teams, supporting local nonprofit and charitable organizations, and staying open that extra 10 minutes so that you can get that birthday present that you may or may not have forgotten about. Oops. They also add to our communities because they're an integral part of our communities. So I would challenge each and every person in this Chamber and everyone listening to get out and support some of your favourite small businesses and, hopefully, find some new small businesses along the way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Calgary Storm Damage Recovery Funding

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hailstorm that devastated Calgary's northeast communities last month has been determined to be the fourth-costliest natural disaster in our country's history, with insured damages being pegged at \$1.2 billion. The massive hailstorm triggered overland flooding, destroyed cars and homes, and countless Calgary families, many of them my constituents, already dealing with the financial hardship caused by the pandemic, are left on their own by this government. Residents, community leaders, and small businesses have been saying that the province's disaster relief program doesn't go far enough. Now, recognizing the gap in the system, scammers hoping to make a quick buck are hailing down on devastated and vulnerable Calgary families.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans look out for each other when times are tough. We saw this community spirit on display after the floods which devastated Calgary in 2013 and after the Fort Mac fires of 2016, but this government has not been looking out for Albertans. Instead of getting working families back on their feet, this government is focused on giving more money to already profitable corporations, not on the job-creating small-business owners whose businesses have been devastated by the hailstorm, not on the working-class Calgarians who were already struggling to make ends meet before the hailstorm.

Until they start helping out Calgarians, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to speak up for those who are being ignored and betrayed by this government because that's what Albertans elected us to do.

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

Bill 32 Provisions on Union Dues Utilization

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. "We will fight on the political stage; we will fight in the courts; and if necessary, we will fight in the street": these are the words of the Alberta Federation of Labour president, Gil McGowan, recently. It sounds like a threat to me.

Many times in this House I have spoken out against the use of a portion of their union membership dues to directly support the AFL,

an organization that has seats reserved for them on the provincial board of the NDP. This is the same party that signed into the Leap Manifesto, you know, that document that seeks to shut down our oil and gas industry. Many members of the affiliated unions are not necessarily NDP supporters. Many are Albertans that support our oil and gas sector and either work in that industry or have family members that depend on that industry. The idea that a party that has "democratic" in their name would support what basically amounts to a political tax on any member of an affiliated union, whether they agree with the ideology of the AFL and NDP or not, is deplorable.

Shame on the NDP and shame on the president of the AFL, Gil McGowan, for threatening violence in the streets of our great province while working against the very industry that has provided the prosperity we have all enjoyed for decades, the same industry that provides the funding to pay for the social programs many Albertans depend on and pays the salaries of many of the members.

The NDP claims that Bill 32 harms workers' rights, but it actually protects workers. It protects workers from ideologically motivated unions who would use their hard-earned money to fund not only political activities but also promote political parties and candidates that go against their own interests. This is why I'm so proud that we've put together Bill 32, that will fight back for Alberta workers. We don't believe workers should be forced to fund political parties like the NDP, organizations, and causes without their direct say, and that's why this bill is so important to support.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

Physician Services Agreement

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "There is a way forward. Let's not waste any more time. The health care system desperately needs the stability that only working together can bring. This is what patients deserve." Doctors are now taking out full-page ads in the newspaper begging this UCP government to stop lying to Albertans and to also stop the chaos. They say that they are willing to hold compensation to current levels if they are treated with respect. To the Premier: will he come back to the table and fix this, or is he going to continue to watch doctors plan to leave the province?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister will have more to say about health policies in answer to the Official Opposition leader's questions shortly.

The reality is that her close confidant and board member of the NDP Gil McGowan has had to apologize today for his comments that were basically saying things against the Holocaust, Mr. Speaker, and not recognizing the seriousness of that, yet that hon. member's chief of staff then said last night, on why she had not condemned that, that they were too busy to do that, too busy to stand up and condemn the comments of Gil McGowan. Again, I will give the hon. member a chance: will she finally stop being busy and condemn those comments?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, Gil McGowan apologized for one tweet. Paul Bunner has not apologized for two decades of racist writing.

Now back to the point at hand. The AMA has tried again and again to negotiate with this government in good faith. While the Premier was busy removing doctors' legislated rights and the

Member for Calgary-Acadia was screaming outside their homes, doctors put forward new proposals to control costs again and again, month over month. Premier, nearly half of doctors are considering leaving; the rest are severely reducing service. It's time to stop the war you started because it's Albertans who are losing. Why won't you go back to the table?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, actually, it's very interesting. If you read the ad, they do not in the end actually propose holding at \$5.4 billion. But, look, a newspaper ad is not how you negotiate \$5.4 billion. It's 10 per cent of this government's budget. The ad isn't an offer; it's another tactic, like the Charter challenge, which they now offer to withdraw because it has no merit, or the survey, which was only completed by 10 per cent of their members. The AMA has got to stop these empty tactics and talk to us. They know what an offer looks like. It doesn't look like a newspaper ad.

Ms Notley: Well, the government is the one that's forced them to this position, and it's ridiculous that the minister is not acknowledging it.

Job number one should be making sure all Albertans have access to a family doctor. Instead, doctors in Crossfield, Sundre, Athabasca, Wainwright, Rocky Mountain House, Canmore, Cochrane, Okotoks, Peace River, Rimbey, Westlock, Three Hills, Bragg Creek, Drayton Valley, Cold Lake, Lacombe, Pincher Creek, Fort McMurray, Ponoka, and Claresholm are all either leaving or reducing services. Premier, how many Albertans have to lose their doctor before you get back to the table and negotiate in good faith?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. Look, we actually did meet with the AMA in July, and we sat down with them. We were told that we were going to be negotiating with them and all of a sudden found out, when we got to the table, that it wasn't negotiations. They had a bunch of preconditions for us to be able to even start negotiating with them. But, look, back to the situation at hand. We have kept our physician compensation budget at \$5.4 billion. It's the largest in the history of this province. It is the largest in the country on a per capita basis. We look forward – if the AMA wants to have another master agreement, we're not going to be agreeable to a situation like the NDP agreed to, where they allowed a 23 per cent increase in physician compensation . . .

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

Education Program Unit Founding

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The passion of the Albertans who rallied outside yesterday was palpable. We hear every day from parents desperate to have this government understand that the cuts they make to support their \$4.7 billion corporate handout have real impacts on their children. Amanda Waters' three-year-old has a speech disorder. She was heartbroken when PUF was cut and his opportunity for therapy along with it. She asks, quote: why would a government cut funding for a program that is proven to decrease services later on in life? Premier, what is your answer to Amanda?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, if boards are reducing services to students, they are doing this in spite of receiving an additional \$120 million across the province in operational dollars.

What is really disappointing, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the NDP Member for Calgary-Buffalo has still not apologized for calling Bill 28, a bill that prevents convicted sex offenders from changing their names – he called it bad for Alberta. I asked yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I'll ask again: will the members opposite apologize for their senior critic's outrageous remarks?

Ms Notley: These parents deserve to have a minister who departs from ridiculous talking points and speaks to their real concerns. Kim Endall's son is 12 years old. He is nonverbal. He has the need for constant pressure. He is sensitive to bright lights and loud noises. He received support until this Premier decided to fire his EA. From her letter she says, quote: my son's education has suffered due to the UCP's failure to acknowledge that he and other students with disabilities cannot learn via online teaching. Premier, Minister, your cuts are hurting real people. Take responsibility, and tell Kim when her son will receive the support he did before . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, every single school board, again, as I've said earlier, is receiving an increase and has the funds they need to support their students.

But, Mr. Speaker, after days of doubling down and tripling down, close friend and ally of the NDP Gil McGowan has retracted his comments minimizing the atrocities of Nazis. Despite this, the NDP has refused to condemn his remarks, with their top adviser saying last night, as I would say, quote, they were too busy, unquote, to be bothered. Is the NDP too busy, or will they finally condemn their close friend's remarks?

Ms Notley: Is this minister too busy to take responsibility for the actual cuts, that are in black and white, that she has imposed upon disabled children across this province? Sam Taekema is five years old. He starts kindergarten in the fall. He has autism. Because of this minister's cuts to PUF, which are real, which are in black and white, that she must stop denying, he will not have the support he was going to have. These cuts were made to a vulnerable population that can't stand up for themselves, and it's time someone stood up for them: that's a quote from their parents. Sam needs this minister to do her job. When will she start?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The numbers are black and white, and every single board is receiving an increase, roughly \$120 million more, in operational funding right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, something else the NDP has failed to condemn is their close friend and ally Gil McGowan's comments calling Albertans of faith religious nutbars. These are comments he has refused to retract, and by standing behind him, the members opposite have clearly demonstrated that they do not support parents who choose a faith-based education for their children. When will they condemn him?

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

Alberta Energy Regulator Vice-president

Mr. Schmidt: While the rest of Alberta gets a job plan that's based on a failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout, it seems that the Premier's friends have a separate job program just for them. This morning we learned that the Premier's former campaign manager, Victory PAC runner, and climate change skeptic was appointed as the vice-president at the Alberta Energy Regulator. Premier, despite what John Weissenberger writes, climate change is real. How does adding climate change skeptics to the staff of the AER do anything to improve that regulator's reputation?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's nice to see the hon. member in the House not celebrating somebody's death for a change, but when it comes to John Weissenberger, that is not an appointment by the government. Dr. Weissenberger was hired by the Alberta Energy Regulator. It's an independent process. The Alberta Energy Regulator's hiring is independent from government. Having said that, Dr. Weissenberger is qualified. He holds a degree in geology from the university of western Ontario, the university of Montreal, and the University of Calgary, where he did his master's and got his PhD. He sat on the boards of Canada's two largest science granting agencies. He is very qualified to do the job.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, I believe that somebody who denies the science of climate change isn't qualified for the position. John Weissenberger wrote that belief in climate change was, quote, a popular delusion and that those who believe in the truth of climate change are participants in a form of, quote, collective psychosis. Now, this comes after the UCP used the cover of the COVID-19 pandemic to suspend environmental monitoring with no notice and no warning. Premier, what is the official government policy on climate change, and why do they continue to appoint climate change deniers to important positions within the government?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I do hope the hon member, while he was away, learned a bit about the Iron Lady as well.

But here I'll give him a little bit of history when it comes to the AER, and that will tell you, Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member is trying to avoid. Damning Investigations into AER Show NDP Was Asleep at the Pump Jack: the *Edmonton Journal*. Leadership fostered a culture of fear while the previous NDP minister did nothing. Oil patch is in crisis as the energy regulator executives under the NDP travel the world launching a side project called ICORE: CBC. Controls and processes to protect against potential conflicts of interest were in place under the NDP: the Auditor General. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition might not like the answer, but I need to be able to hear it.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

2:00

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the government that Jim Ellis was an appointment of the previous PC government, just as Laurie Pushor and John Weissenberger are appointments of this government. Appointing a climate change skeptic to the regulator comes around the same time that the UCP appointed mountain climber Dave Rodney to a quarter-million-dollar-a-year job in Houston. Neither is qualified for these posts. It just shows how hard this Premier will work to find jobs for his friends. Mr. Weissenberger doesn't even believe in climate change, which is ridiculous given that he's overseeing environmental regulation at the regulator. To the Premier: will you remove John Weissenberger from the AER today and scrap your plan to employ your buddies in every government position?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, not an appointment; hired by the Alberta Energy Regulator. What the hon. member is trying to do is distract from the following. The Public Interest Commissioner report said that the AER leadership under the NDP "grossly mismanaged public funds in establishing and supporting the operations" of an arm's-length organization. The Public Interest Commissioner report also says that the NDP "mismanaged public assets by misappropriating or by attempting to misappropriate the intellectual property of the AER." And we know that the Auditor General is looking for \$2.4 million that went missing under that

hon. member's watch while he was a member of the NDP government. Where is it?

Canadian Energy Centre

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I raised with the Premier the public concerns about how the disastrous energy war room was using Alberta tax dollars to promote fundraising and data collection campaigns for the provincial and federal Conservative parties. The response of the Energy minister was that the war room is "fulfilling the role that it's intended to do." To the Premier. Your own minister admitted that the war room was built to campaign for the Conservatives. How is this legal, and why have you been misleading Albertans about this ridiculous war room of yours for so long?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Canadian Energy Centre has been tasked with is defending the energy sector, including pipelines. But you know who didn't support pipelines and opposed every single one? It was Gil McGowan. He opposed, going back to 2008, Alberta Clipper, Southern Lights, opposed Energy East, opposed Trans Mountain, opposed KXL. There wasn't a single pipeline that that group supported. What the Canadian Energy Centre is doing is countering that sort of thing.

Mr. Sabir: First the Premier hired long-time UCP buddy Tom Olsen to run the war room, then Olsen stole a logo for the war room, then he insulted the *New York Times*, and the list goes on and on and on and on. What an embarrassment. Now it's revealed that this war room is actually just a taxpayer-funded organization whose sole purpose is to secure the re-election of this Premier and his buddies. To the Premier: will you commit here and now to making public every penny the war room spent on advertisement and promotions?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to highlight some of the things I mentioned in my last answer, when the Northern Gateway pipeline was approved by the joint review panel in 2013, guess what Gil McGowan and the AFL said? They said that they will support First Nations and environmental groups that would continue to fight against pipelines. How much money did they spend on that? We have to spend money to counter campaigns like that so we can support these pipelines, so we can get them built and get people to work. I think it's appalling that the NDP would not support pipelines.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, I wrote to the Auditor General today requesting an investigation into this matter. One way or another we are getting to the bottom of this. The war room is spending tax dollars on the United Conservative Party and the Conservative Party of Canada, which is wrong. Albertans are rightfully outraged by this, and so am I. To the Premier: last chance; will you commit here and now to shut down this international embarrassment?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, that's just a ridiculous statement from the member opposite. What the CEC, Canadian Energy Centre, is spending money on is defending our energy sector. If we'd had something like the Canadian Energy Centre when these pipeline projects were going through regulatory processes, maybe one of them would have been built on time. If those pipelines had been built on time, maybe the province wouldn't be in such a circumstance now to not have pipeline capacity to move our product. The Canadian Energy Centre is fulfilling a very important role and will

continue to do it notwithstanding the fact that the NDP do not support pipelines.

Bills 8 and 28

Mrs. Allard: Mr. Speaker, it's understandable that members of this House hold a wide range of beliefs. That said, there are initiatives that every member should be able to support. Unfortunately, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo seems to think differently, saying on Saturday, quote: every bill they brought, 33 bills, is bad for Alberta. These 33 bills include the protecting Albertans from convicted sex offenders amendment act, which has the support of many organizations across Alberta, including Grande Prairie's Caribou Child & Youth Centre. To the Minister of Service Alberta: could you explain the impacts of this legislation and tell us whether you think the member should apologize for his comments and express his support for this bill?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course the Member for Calgary-Buffalo should apologize for his comments. What he said this weekend inferred that protecting Alberta families and communities from convicted sex offenders is a bad thing. Shame on him, and shame on the NDP for staying silent after he made those comments. This legislation is so important because it protects Alberta families and communities from convicted sex offenders by making sure that those offenders can never ever change their names in Alberta and hide in our communities and hide from their pasts. I'm proud to be a part of a government that takes action to protect Alberta families and communities even if the NDP will not.

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

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that in his comments the Member for Calgary-Buffalo was also implying that the Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act is, quote, bad for the people, to the Minister of Justice: can you explain how this legislation, in fact, protects some of the most vulnerable people in our society from sexual exploitation and subsequently if you believe the member owes an apology to victims of human trafficking and that he should change his position and make clear that this legislation is both necessary and good for Albertans?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things that the NDP should apologize for, and I mean a lot of things that they should apologize for. I'll tell you that in my constituency of Calgary-Elbow they were so excited to get rid of the NDP in the last election. I wish – I wish – that I'd be shocked in this House to hear comments like this being made by members of the NDP, but you know what? I'm not shocked anymore. Human trafficking is a serious issue, and that Member for Calgary-Buffalo should apologize. It's appalling. We believe in this. We're going to take action to protect the vulnerable.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that these two pieces of legislation in particular serve to protect many vulnerable Alberta women, among others, and given that the minister for the status of women spends time meeting with stakeholders on issues related to violence against women, to the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: could you tell this House what feedback you have heard on these pieces of legislation from groups advocating for vulnerable women in

Alberta and tell us whether you believe the comments from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo are out of touch and require an apology?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, this is what the opposition calls bad legislation: Clare's law, ending human trafficking, stopping sex offenders from changing their names. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the ministers of Community and Social Services, Children's Services, and Justice and also the Human Trafficking Task Force, who are taking the time to listen to survivors right across this province to help fight this evil. Task force members like Jan Fox and Paul Brandt were actually attacked by friends of the members opposite. Look to the incredible work of people like Andrea Silverstone from Sagesse, who has mentored me personally through absolutely every piece of this legislation. I'm sure the survivors of sexual exploitation would not agree with the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

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

Health Care Workforce

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health has spent months smearing doctors, chasing them out of Alberta, and he's about to pick another fight, this time with Alberta nurses. The minister's plan, as commissioned for him, is to lay off more than 2,300 nurses to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout. Apparently, shareholder dividends are more important to this government than the nurses who've cared for Albertans at their bedsides through a deadly global pandemic. Why won't this minister simply admit he's putting profits before patients by laying off these heroic nurses?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know – when was it? – last week, when we finally tabled Bill 30, and not once in the last two weeks has the hon. Health critic even bothered to ask a question about Bill 30 in this House. It's kind of shameful. It amends nine different pieces of legislation. There's a repeal of two different pieces of legislation. Yet the hon. member keeps on coming in here spreading fiction, continuing to mislead Albertans and scare patients in this province when we have this piece of legislation that he, for some reason, refuses to ask any questions about.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:10.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that this apparently rather sensitive minister is rushing headlong to make more room for American-style private profit in our public health care system, speaking of Bill 30, and given that these corporate clinics divert money out of Alberta's health care system on top of the handout they're already getting from taxpayers and given that this move to profit-centred care will harm patients, why won't this minister admit how many Albertans who actually deliver health care at the bedside will lose their jobs because of Bill 30 and his insistence of putting profits before patients and corporate shareholders before actual care providers?

Mr. Shandro: How embarrassing, Mr. Speaker, for the hon. Health critic to be standing in this room and admitting how little he knows about the health system. It's quite shameful. Our chartered surgical

facilities in this province are integrated. They're managed by AHS under contract. They are publicly funded. The NDP themselves funded them for their four years in government. They provide 15 per cent of our surgeries in this province. So what's the real problem? The real problem is that the NDP are here representing one interest group, the unions. They're not here to fight to protect a publicly funded health care system. They're here to protect a waiting list.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that this very minister and his government is preparing to renew its attacks on heroic Alberta nurses in the midst of a global pandemic and that at the same time this government is trying to muzzle the very nurses who speak up for themselves and Alberta patients, much as he's trying to gain control over every health care watchdog and regulatory body that could speak up against his undermining of our public health care system, why won't this minister admit that Bill 32 is simply a disgraceful attempt to silence the voices of Albertans who oppose his rush towards a failed model of profit-centred, American-style corporate care in health care?

Mr. Shandro: American-style? Mr. Speaker, this is Alberta-style. We have right now already 42 of these chartered surgical facilities integrated – not parallel to but integrated – within the system, managed by AHS under contract. We had 42 of them that were funded by the NDP. This is Alberta-style. There are publicly funded surgeries in these facilities. It's disgraceful and shameful that the hon. Health critic – the Health critic – knows so little about our health system.

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

Agricultural Concerns

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The chances of us making money are slim to none this year: that's farmer Chris Allam expressing how difficult he expects this year's harvest to be. Reportedly, the upcoming harvest in many parts of the northern half of the province is expected to be the worst harvest in 18 years. Minister, we know challenging times are coming for many farmers this fall. What are you planning to do to support these farmers who are fearful about their wet fields not yielding a harvest?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that very important question. This year has been very difficult for farmers, especially north of Edmonton. There's been about a broad swath between Westlock all the way to Lac La Biche where there have been extreme amounts of moisture. I was up there, did a tour last week, and a lot of areas had over 20 inches of rain. That is something that we are looking at, the unseeded acreage benefit that AFSC does provide farmers, to see if there's additional relief that we can give to farmers over and above crop insurance.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last year was already named the harvest from hell and given that this is the third bad harvest year in a row and given that we are hearing again and again that supports for farmers suffering multiyear crop failures are just not adequate, is the minister planning to create supports specifically designed to prevent farm bankruptcies due to multiyear

climate-caused crop failures, and if not, why not? I know he alluded to it in his first answer. Let's hear some details.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say again that we are working with AFSC to see if there's additional programming required to help farmers, especially in hard-hit areas that have had multiple years of excess moisture, but as of right now there are 650,000 acres that were left unseeded in the province. That's one of the highest on record. On a lighter note, there are over 85 per cent of crops in the province that are actually in good to excellent condition. But I know, personally, that in my riding there was a terrible hailstorm that hit a couple of days ago, and they're still doing the assessments to see. I know farmers with between 80 to 100 per cent crop damage that happened with wild weather this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that just last week I visited my hometown of Thorhild to talk to farmers and given that they told me how challenging these bad economic conditions and the weather are for their well-being and their mental health and given that they are now also worried about losing their local doctor due to the mess created by the Minister of Health, Minister: what are your plans to improve support for farmers' mental health and well-being during these times so they can manage the economic anxiety caused by poor harvest and diminished income? They are really feeling the pain.

The Speaker: The minister of agriculture.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health is important for farmers and all Albertans, and we do encourage farmers to go out and to make sure – if they're tough enough to farm and ranch, they're tough enough to talk about their mental health. I can tell you from all my travels across the province that when it came to Bill 6 or the carbon tax that the NDP brought in over their four-year reign, that was something that added a lot of mental stress and hardship on Alberta farmers. This government will always stand up for our farmers to make sure that they can succeed and compete globally on an international scale.

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

Canada Infrastructure Bank Projects

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United Conservative Party ran on a promise to stand up and demand a fair deal for Albertans within Canada. The Canada Infrastructure Bank is investing \$35 billion across Canada into large infrastructure projects over the next decade, and I want to ensure that Alberta's infrastructure needs are not ignored in favour of projects in Ontario and Quebec. Can the Minister of Infrastructure tell this House what he is doing to secure funding from the Canada Infrastructure Bank and to ensure that Alberta's infrastructure remains a priority on this agenda?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the Canada Infrastructure Bank represents an opportunity, like the member said, for low-cost financing, including P3s, for major infrastructure projects in trade and transportation; green infrastructure, including irrigation and waste water; transit; and broadband. I have been in touch with the new chair of the board, and my department officials are discussing all manner of opportunities in Alberta with the bank. As the member just stated, we will seize the opportunity.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has a seemingly endless supply of federal taxpayer dollars and given, as the minister says, that the CIB has created these major funding streams, including green, trade and transport, transit, broadband, amongst others, can the Minister of Infrastructure confirm if Alberta has received any of this funding and, if so, can the Minister of Infrastructure name any specific projects?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, while no projects have actually received financing, due diligence is being done on so many projects. One example is the passenger train between Calgary Airport and Banff. Such a project would have the ability to bring workers and tourists to the mountains while resolving the traffic condition concerns like those from this weekend in Banff and Bow River Valley. Moreover, this project fits well with the ideology and the world view of federal Minister McKenna. How can she turn us down?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the Canada Infrastructure Bank and its federal proponents never seem to talk about Canada's all-important natural resource sector and given that Albertans have a huge desire to invest in and develop our natural resources, as is being done in oil, natural gas, metallurgical coal, forestry, agriculture, and many more, what is the Minister of Infrastructure doing to ensure that the voices of many Albertans employed in the resource industry are heard by the Canada Infrastructure Bank?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, whenever I speak to Ottawa, I have been advocating for the inclusion of projects like irrigation and liquefied natural gas export infrastructure to be included as funding streams for the CIB. Irrigation has the potential to boost our agricultural economy and exports, all the while mitigating flood risk. Natural gas is the fuel we need to help eliminate energy poverty and clean up emissions in places like my native India. Albertans feed and fuel the world, and on this side of the House we are proud of that.

Election Financing and Women's Political Participation

Member Irwin: Big money, dark money, sketchy money: no matter what you call it, there's no place for it in politics, yet the UCP seems intent on bringing it into Alberta and making our province look more and more like America, with this Premier looking out only for his wealthiest friends. Not only will this mean that the richest Albertans will have even more influence over our political system but also that women and underrepresented groups like indigenous folks and people of colour will face greater barriers to entering politics. At a time when we should be encouraging more women and more racialized folks to enter politics, why is this Premier making it more difficult?

2:20

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, the only thing stopping women from running for politics is the kind of fear that this opposition brings into the discussions. The only thing that actually stops racialized people from running in politics is the kind of fear and racism that comes from people who will not actually stand together and work unified in a province that actually needs to come together. I've never been more touched than I have been in the last little while by the Black Lives Matter movement and the work that we've done

collaboratively. But it's that kind of behaviour that actually stops women and racialized minorities from actually running in politics.

Member Irwin: Wow. You know, this fear thing: it's not just us raising these concerns. Ask Her YYC and Parity YEG, two organizations that support women in politics, are urging this government to rethink Bill 29, noting that it "will have significant impacts on the incumbency advantage, exaggerate existing economic barriers, and reduce transparency, making it more challenging to elect leaders that represent the communities they serve." To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The evidence is clear that women already face significant barriers in entering politics. Why do you insist on making it harder?

Mrs. Aheer: I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things that makes it harder for women especially to run are comments like from members who dance on the graves of former politicians, especially strong, women politicians. I would suggest that any woman who happens to be a capitalist – heaven forbid – or somebody in the private sector who is interested in running for politics might have a concern about their well-being, considering that nobody on that side has stood up to condemn those comments.

Member Irwin: Given that Ask Her YYC and Parity YEG have analyzed Bill 29 through an intersectional lens and it's clear that this bill will impact women and racialized candidates – we know that the use of gendered and intersectional lenses like gender-based analysis plus, GBA plus, is critical when drafting legislation, and it has proven to help governments develop better policies and programs – to the minister of status of women: can you update us on your ministry's work on GBA plus, and can you confirm that all of your bills, including Bill 29, have undergone GBA plus analysis?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, being that I'm at the table, that I'm quite certain that all of my colleagues would agree that I'm pretty vocal about how I feel about our legislation. Having said that, the interesting piece of this is that when that group was in government, I actually asked consistent questions on GBA plus and the impact that it was having on government. Do you know what the answer was back to me? "Oh, that's an intergovernmental discussion. We don't actually share that information with the people of Alberta," even though it was the taxpayer who was actually paying for those platforms to make sure that government actually followed GBA plus.

PDD Direct Operations

Ms Renaud: On a scale of 1 to 5, and I quote, how important is it to you that your family member/individual continues to have the same peer connections/roommates? This is one question from a survey sent to guardians about the notice of the upcoming changes to service delivery models for really vulnerable children and adults with disabilities. It's called PDD direct operations. Mr. Speaker, I've heard the minister say that she'd consult with families, guardians, and physicians before ushering in changes, so my question is to her through you. This is dehumanizing. This is misleading. Is this what you call consultation?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, we know that there were families a few weeks ago here in the gallery who wanted to meet me, and I did meet with them, so I am committed to engagement. I am actually very disappointed that the member opposite is taking a small piece of the survey completely out of context when in fact that survey is quite robust. There is room for open discussion, and

there is also an opportunity for families to meet one on one during this engagement.

Ms Renaud: Given that there are 17 medically fragile children with complex disabilities who now live at Rosecrest, given that they have 60 days left of a 90-day notice before their life-saving services will be changed, given that we know that these kids are already at risk – there's a public health emergency – can the minister promise all members of this House that the physicians and disability professionals who oversee and deliver the care will be consulted before the notice period runs out?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to reiterate that this is a consultation that we're undertaking right now. No decisions have been made. I have indicated quite vociferously that the engagement will be meaningful. We will talk to all stakeholders, which includes the service providers, it includes families, and it includes staff. That engagement is under way right now, and before any decisions are made, we'll make sure that the process is done properly and follows proper protocol.

Ms Renaud: Given that I'm incredibly disappointed with – this isn't consultation. It's a demeaning survey. You've already given them that 90 days' notice. They're panicking; they're worried. These are real human beings that need real answers, not just talking points. Just commit to doing the work. Do the right thing. Stop this. We're in a pandemic. It's dangerous. Stop it now.

The Speaker: I'm not sure that there was a question in that statement, and it may even be considered a threat. I'm not entirely sure, but it certainly was heading in that direction.

Mrs. Sawhney: I'm not entirely sure what that was either. It certainly wasn't a question.

If anybody is to be disappointed, I think I have the right to be disappointed because we are undertaking a consultation, and there is nothing but fear and smear that's been exacerbated by this member opposite. She's speaking to families and scaring them and not talking with truth and honesty about what this consultation really means. We are doing things properly. I will continue to be authentic, transparent, honest, and open with everybody who's impacted, unlike the member opposite, who is trying to scare.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has the call.

Terwillegar Drive Expansion Project in Edmonton

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced that the province would be investing up to \$120 million to complete the Terwillegar Drive expansion in south Edmonton. This project will undoubtedly do a lot to create much-needed jobs and inject stimulus into the economy. Can the minister explain why the government chose to fund this specific project over others in the capital city?

The Speaker: I would just like to note that a point of order was called at 2:26.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for that question. This project has been a long time coming for the residents of Edmonton-South West. In fact, this has been 40 years in the making. As a parent who would drive Terwillegar Drive every single day, I know this investment will greatly improve the quality of life for our businesses and families.

It will also create 865 jobs and support economic development for generations to come.

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

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that this is a core infrastructure project being built in the fastest growing part of Edmonton and will have wide-reaching impacts for neighbouring communities such as my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont, can the minister explain what the impact of this project will be for everyday families and businesses, and when will we see shovels in the ground?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member once again for that question. This project will allow Edmontonians to get around faster and safer, which will reduce gridlock and congestion. It will spur economic growth and development along the Terwillegar corridor, and it will create hundreds of good direct and indirect jobs for Albertans. We are expecting shovels to hit the ground by 2021 and for the work to be completed by 2025.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that some of the members opposite have claimed that their former government also supported this project but at the same time expressed concern that other priority projects flagged by the city like a new rec centre and a new zoo project weren't chosen over the Terwillegar Drive expansion, can the minister clarify what these members are talking about? Or is this just more anger and division coming from the opposition benches?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for that particular question. It is ridiculous coming from the NDP, but then I am not surprised because the former NDP government attached a small \$24 million investment to this project but with so many restrictions, including bizarre rules around electric bus minimums that the city couldn't deliver. This is a project that will cost \$120 million in investment, which this government has made to get the people of the southwest, families and businesses, going. The NDP keep focusing on anger and division. We're focusing on projects.

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

2:30

Capital Projects and Job Creation

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month the government unveiled an economic plan, a blueprint that lays out lots for profitable corporations and leaves everyone else picking up the bill. This is a rinse-and-repeat approach by this Premier, and it hasn't worked. We lost 50,000 jobs even prior to this pandemic. What's more is that this infrastructure strategy is smoke and mirrors. Most of this money was already committed in last year's budget. To the minister: when will you cut the games and actually do your job and get people back to work?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, our government's plan is to get people back to work by investing \$10 billion in infrastructure projects even during these difficult times. If the member remembers that there is still a pandemic, he knows fully well when and where it came from. People are looking for work. Our government is putting people back

to work. I don't know what he wants us to do. Do you want us to stop these projects and not get people back to work? I don't get what the question is.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier can't be trusted when he says that there will be jobs created immediately with this infrastructure spend and given that he said the exact same thing with his failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout and given that this government has refused to explore things like community benefit agreements, which can be used to draw investment and at the same time ensure that Albertans are getting the best bang for their buck, to the minister: why is it that he's scared of community benefit agreements, and why is it that he's seemingly scared of trying anything that might actually create jobs?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, that unprecedented \$10 billion investment will cover and touch every nook and corner and every community in Alberta, whether it is capital maintenance and renewal or capital projects: schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, you name it. We are building. We are very busy while the member is too busy fearmongering. If the member remembers well, when they were in government, because of their risky ideological policies, they killed jobs. They killed livelihoods. We are trying to bring them back.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this UCP government is allowing for a no-strings-attached approach when advertising and incentivizing already profitable companies and given that the only strings I've seen them attach to date are a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, that they've already doubled down on, and given that everyday Albertans are left picking up the bill, to the minister: will you commit to a monthly report specifically on how many jobs your infrastructure spend is creating, and if not, is it because you've inflated the numbers to distract from the failed jobs record?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, when that member was in government, probably he would remember that they lost almost 200,000 jobs. With our \$10 billion investment we are right now going to create 50,000 jobs. That investment will position us very well for the future recovery of the economy, which will create and bring back all the jobs lost under their government. In the meantime this is the time to celebrate, rather than the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, who says that he's proud to celebrate the death of a female Prime Minister of the U.K.

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

Worker Overtime Pay

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is burying working families under bigger and bigger bills to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout and to please insider lobbyists: higher income taxes, higher property taxes, higher school fees, higher tuition, higher interest on student loans, higher insurance premiums, higher camping fees. The list goes on. Now the UCP is making it even harder for families to make ends meet by letting bosses refuse to pay overtime. Why is this UCP government making working families pay for their failed economic policies?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the comments made by the members opposite that we are eliminating overtime are simply incorrect. The rules for people earning overtime working a standard job, 9 to 5, over eight hours a day, 44 hours a week: that hasn't changed. The only thing we're modifying is how we're changing the rules for averaging arrangements. Averaging arrangements apply to people who are working, like, 10 days on and 10 days off. The previous government made significant changes to those rules, making it very difficult for employers to employ Albertans. We're making changes and making it easier to get Albertans back to work.

Ms Gray: Given that in the minister's own fact sheet titled New Workplace Rules: Information for Employers it clearly states, "There is more flexibility for employers to determine how and if daily overtime applies" and given that many working parents already have to choose between putting their kids to bed at night or paying the mortgage and given that letting the boss refuse to pay overtime means that many Albertans are going to be working double shifts and still fall further behind every month, what does the minister of labour say to the Albertans who can't pay their phone bill or their property taxes while he showers their bosses with billions of dollars in handouts?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, this is simply incorrect. You know, the previous government's approach to creating jobs, quote, unquote, was to layer taxes, regulations, and rules upon the employers. We heard from the Member for Highwood last night, who, because of the NDP's Bill 17, the changes to the labour laws, had to lay off a significant portion of his workforce. We are changing that. We are making the rules easier for employers. This is all about reducing costs and getting Albertans back to work. We have Albertans' backs.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has just stated very clearly that this is about reducing costs – his fact sheet is clear; this is about more flexibility for employers to determine how and if daily overtime applies – and given that Bill 32 lets bosses temporarily lay off Albertans without any notice and then gives them a month to pay out wages already earned and given that half of working Alberta families have only \$200 in their bank account at the end of the month, how many families is this government going to push into crisis, bankruptcy, and poverty with this cruel attack on workers?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, that question there demonstrates the difference between our party, which understands that job creators create the jobs, and their party, which layered on red tape, costs, and actually drove businesses and jobs out of this province.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to termination pay and extending the timelines for employers to pay, the intent behind that is simply to allow employers to make it on the next regular pay. The suggestion that people are going to have to wait months and will be missing pay is simply incorrect. What we've stated here is that it has to be within 10 days, on the next regular pay. That's a normal pay cycle. The 30-day wait is not correct.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a question.

Recycling Programs

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The used oil recycling regulation has not been updated since its beginning 23 years ago.

Some non return incentive containers, specifically diesel exhaust fluid, antifreeze, and windshield washer containers, were never part of the program, but many argue that they should be. They were actually collected by the program till recently. But now ARMA cannot afford to collect them and has begun refusing them, essentially forcing all of them out of recycle and into the garbage, while almost every other province does recycle them. Minister, will our government finally fix this and collect diesel exhaust fluid, antifreeze, and windshield washer containers, and when might that happen?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, windshield washer, antifreeze, and diesel exhaust fluid containers are not part of the used oil materials recycling program. The government and the Alberta Recycling Management Authority are aware of their past inclusion in the program despite not having an environmental surcharge to pay for the recycling. We can't continue to ask Albertans to foot the bill for recycling these products, but ARMA is currently looking at how they are recycling these products in other provinces.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you. Given that oil container return incentive fees are outdated and given that in every other province the rates are between four times and double Alberta's rates and given that in December the government actually changed the regulation to allow ARMA the authority, with the minister's office, to reset the rates – ARMA says that they can't get this done for another year, and the ministry has cautioned them to go slowly – Minister, what will you do to expedite the fee update before the collectors and processors go bankrupt and lose their jobs?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Our government recognizes that fees for used oil materials may differ in other provinces and that a fee increase has not occurred in Alberta since the program began. However, with the major drop in oil prices there's also a drop in the value of used oil, which has further impacted the program's ability to recover costs. Since maximum fees are no longer regulated, ARMA can propose new fees for designated material that they manage, and my understanding is that they are having a conversation about that with the industry.

Mr. Orr: Given that ag plastics recycling has been proposed for many years and has been advocated for by my constituents and municipalities and given that there is a large need for a robust agricultural plastics recycling program and that we have had multiple pilot programs here in Alberta and given that the environmental organization Cleanfarms recently opened up shop in Lethbridge in hopes of monitoring the current ag plastics recycling pilot program, to the minister: what does the future look like for ag plastics recycling in Alberta?

2:40

Mr. Jason Nixon: Alberta environment recognizes that agriculture plastic recycling is an important issue, particularly with municipalities in our province. This is an example of stakeholders working proactively with government and ARMA towards a positive outcome, in this case a provincial pilot on agriculture plastic recycling. I look forward to seeing the results of the project, which the minister of agriculture and I will use to inform future policy decisions.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to points of order.

Hon. members, it's time for points of order. The first point of order was called at 2 o'clock by the hon. deputy Official Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of a Member

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At 2 o'clock, while the Government House Leader was speaking, he referred a number of times to a member of the opposition caucus not being in this Chamber. As is clarified in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 13, "allusions to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber are unacceptable."

I would also note, Mr. Speaker, that I believe it was only yesterday that you used the terminology "wildly inappropriate" while censuring the exact same member for this behaviour. I believe this is a point of order. I think the member should apologize and withdraw, and as he is the Government House Leader and understands best how this House functions, I think he should commit to no longer committing this infraction, which he appears to do repeatedly.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I never referred to anybody's absence from this Chamber. I did refer to hoping that the member, while he was away – I didn't say whether he was away while he was sitting inside the Chamber – had taken some time to reflect on his outrageous comments in regard to the former Prime Minister of Great Britain and the greatest female leader probably of all time, who he wished was dead earlier. I did refer to that, certainly, but I did not refer to his absence from the Chamber at any time in my answers to the questions.

The Speaker: I thank you for your submissions, and I categorically disagree with them, particularly because *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 619, says, "Allusions to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber are unacceptable." The Blues, which I have the benefit of: "Mr. Speaker, I do hope the hon. member, while he was away, learned a bit." While you did not include the words "while he was away from the Chamber," certainly the allusion was that you were applying it to his absence from the Chamber. I am sympathetic to the deputy Official Opposition House Leader's position that you were reminded of this just yesterday, and I would be more than happy to receive a withdrawal from you.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to withdraw and apologize for pointing out that the member has not been at work.

The Speaker: I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

The hon. deputy Opposition House Leader raised an additional point of order at 2:25.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, I also raised a point of order at 2:11, which I believe you made note of at the time.

The Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. At 2:11 the Minister of Health in this place, while speaking about the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, said clearly: he misleads Albertans. What the Member for Edmonton-City Centre does is advocate for Albertans, raise issues of importance for Albertans, and defend Albertans and our public

health care system, and it is inappropriate to accuse him of misleading, as per the very many rulings that you yourself have issued in this place. I ask the Minister of Health to apologize and withdraw.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, happy to withdraw and apologize on behalf of the Minister of Health for, again, pointing out the fact that the member was misleading the House, which is certainly unparliamentary. We're happy to withdraw and apologize for that.

The Speaker: I consider the matter dealt with and concluded as I would agree that it was a point of order.

Point of order 3, at approximately 2:25.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At 2:25, 2:26 the Minister of Community and Social Services said clearly to our Member for St. Albert that the member opposite "is trying to scare." My point of order is under 23(h), (i), and (j): "makes allegations against another Member," "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member," and "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." The idea that the member opposite is trying to scare absolutely meets the definition of those three things.

I would suggest that the Member for St. Albert was in here asking very legitimate questions on behalf of staff and families at a site that this government is looking to privatize. She is here advocating for those families and for those workers, asking very sensible questions. To have her questions demeaned and her character demeaned by stating that she is trying to scare is inappropriate and against the practices of this House. I ask that the Minister of Community and Social Services apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of debate. The reality, and the reason I find this quite comical from the deputy Opposition House Leader, is that if you look at almost every question that her caucus asked today and, in fact, every question that her caucus asks in this Chamber almost every day, they accuse other members of horrific things that are not true, including trying to hurt people, hurt children, pickpocket, take things, steal things. Certainly, this is a matter of debate.

I agree with the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services that the NDP continue to fearmonger and spread fear. It's sad. From our perspective that's what they're attempting to do. This is a matter of debate before this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. It is not a point of order.

The Speaker: I thank you for your submissions. Indeed, this is not a point of order and is a matter of debate. I would note that on numerous occasions members of the opposition did make that exact same accusation about members of the government in today's question period, so this is a matter of debate.

I would like to provide some clarification. At approximately 1:41 I made an intervention asking if the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung perhaps made an accusation that someone was lying. In fact, he was not speaking about the minister at all at that point in time, so on behalf of the chair there's no further requirement, and certainly he did not make any accusations that were inappropriate.

Hon. members, this concludes the points of order for today. As such, it's time for Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 22

Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move third reading of Bill 22, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020.

Bill 22 represents another step toward making Alberta's economy freer and faster and upholds our commitment to cut the red tape that impacts the lives of everyday Albertans.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 22 proposes changes to 14 items. This includes amendments to 12 statutes and the repealing of two others. It is a hefty bill, Madam Speaker, I might add, but I am proud to see how our government is taking red tape reduction seriously. We're taking it seriously because, done right, it will stimulate our economy. In addition, this is something our businesses have asked for and have been asking for for a long time.

In particular, it's a pleasure working with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who continue to hold our government and governments across our country to account when it comes to getting out of the way of our entrepreneurs and our job creators. Ultimately, Madam Speaker, they are the ones who will create the jobs. Our job is to get out of their way, and I am proud to say that our government is responding well to that.

We still have more work ahead, but we've already cut 5 per cent, or approximately 37,000 pieces of regulatory hoops, of the 700,000 regulations that we have counted so far. That doesn't even include this bill, so I will be excited to provide new numbers to the House on our progress in the future.

The items of this bill fall under the purview of six departments: Agriculture and Forestry, Energy, Environment and Parks, Service Alberta, Municipal Affairs, and Justice and Solicitor General. It was a pleasure working with each of my colleagues from these areas to ensure impactful and meaningful items were brought forward into this legislation. Red tape reduction is a team effort, Madam Speaker, and I am encouraged by the work our team on this side of the House has done in order to cut red tape and move towards our ultimate goal of a one-third reduction.

2:50

This isn't just about checking a box, though, Madam Speaker. We are taking steps to do this right so that our province benefits at a time when we need it the most. More specifically, in terms of how these items impact our red tape reductions efforts, these items can be grouped into four categories: expediting government approvals, reducing the administrative burden on municipalities, enhancing government transparency, and eliminating outdated requirements and removing unnecessary burden imposed on Albertans and businesses in order to promote jobs and economic growth.

The last theme is key, Madam Speaker. When I first introduced this legislation, I noted how important it was to make government work better for Albertans. This is true at the best of times, but Bill 22 was introduced during an unprecedented time; in the midst of a global pandemic, in a time of economic downturn.

I'm pleased to see Alberta on a path to economic recovery as we follow the Alberta recovery plan announced by the hon. Premier and the hon. Minister of Finance not long ago. As you may have read, red tape reduction was and continues to be an important part

of that plan. Thankfully, we've seen in the past weeks more Albertans are getting back to work and our economy is beginning to wake up, but we are far from out of the woods. That's what makes Bill 22 and all red tape reduction initiatives so important at this critical time. The more burdens we remove for businesses, the more opportunities they can create for Albertans.

For example, Bill 22 removes the requirement that oil sands schemes, operations, or processing plants with production capacity above approximately 2,000 barrels per day be approved by cabinet. This change to remove cabinet approval will cut up to 10 months off the approval process while still ensuring that the rigorous review by the Alberta Energy Regulator is undertaken. This means moving projects forward quicker, getting shovels in the ground sooner, and putting Albertans to work now rather than later, with no less environmental rigour.

Also, noting something the hon. House leader has brought up a few times, this bill will cut red tape and repeal the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act. As I said during second reading of this bill, this act was introduced by the previous government, was funded by the now repealed carbon tax, and established Energy Efficiency Alberta. Emissions Reduction Alberta and the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre continue to deliver similar programs. Let's be honest, Madam Speaker. We heard from many Albertans that they don't want an Ontario-based company installing light bulbs and shower heads in our homes anymore.

These are just samples of how Bill 22 makes life better for Albertans and helps bolster economic activity. Ultimately, Bill 22 is about using government actions to demonstrate that we have the backs of Albertans during tough times.

Now, I think we can all agree that actions speak louder than words. Bill 22 continues our work to take definite action against burdensome red tape. I'd like to thank the House for the thoughtful debate and support for the bill in the steps we've taken as a government to cut red tape for Albertans and our businesses. I look forward to bringing more red tape reduction matters before this House in the future.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 32

Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020

[Adjourned debate July 14: Mr. Shepherd]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to join debate on Bill 32? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020. Let me start off by saying that the title of the bill is so misleading, that it doesn't do anything whatsoever that you can call a balance or restoring balance. It's a completely misleading title for this act, which makes changes to six very critical and important pieces of legislation: Employment Standards Code, Labour Relations Code, public education bargaining act, Post-secondary Learning Act; Public Service Employee Relations Act, and Police Officers Collective Bargaining Act.

Before I get to the changes that this legislation makes, I would also say that the changes that are contained in this piece of legislation are important to many Albertans across this province, in each and every constituency, and they are significant in my riding

as well, where many people are first- and second-generation immigrants and are mostly in jobs where they would need to get protection of the law and some understanding of their legal rights, because some of those jobs are such that they are minimum wage jobs. Unless we have a minimum wage somewhere in the legislation, I think that negotiating between employer and employee is completely not a balanced kind of activity, so the protections that are contained in these pieces of legislation are important to working Albertans, working families.

I think that the government didn't hide their intent when they brought this legislation, that this is designed to suppress the dissent. This is designed to attack unions who represent working families, working Albertans. They have been very open about it in the Legislature, outside the Legislature. Those unions have historically not been on the side of conservative politics, the reason being that conservative politics are always about CEOs, big money, big corporations, not anything about everyday Albertans or average Canadians. That's why they have been exercising their rights, protected under the Charter, to assemble and express their views on things that matter to them collectively. Government has no hesitation in saying that they are attacking those unions, that they're attacking the rights of those families. They use the words "big bosses" and all those things, but, in fact, this bill is attacking individual Albertans, working families, working Albertans.

I think that there are six pieces of legislation. I will try to go through as many as I can. For instance, it's changing "averaging agreements" to "averaging arrangements." I think that before the legislation was drafted in a way that the minister "may enter into . . . agreements," but now it will say that the minister may establish arrangements. There is a big difference between these two statements, between these two powers. When you say that you may enter into an agreement, there is some understanding, some implied negotiating involved there. An agreement itself is some kind of negotiating and some consensus on common terms. But here this legislation is giving the minister a carte blanche that they can establish arrangements. They are not agreements; they are arrangements. Whatever their CEOs and corporate bosses will tell them, they can impose those arrangements on working families and working Albertans. That's a blatant attack on working people. That's overreach of the government on people's rights.

3:00

It's also changing the notice period. It says that they're restoring balance. I don't know. When you're reducing the notice period and requiring that employers only give two weeks' notice – nowhere in Canada, nowhere across this country do we see any of this kind of legislation. You can only come up with this legislation when you only talk to corporate masters and CEOs. When you will talk to average Albertans, when you will talk to working families, when you will talk to people representing working families, then, I guess, you will see that that's not restoring balance; that's tilting the balance in favour of corporate masters and CEOs.

Also, the changes that are contained in this piece of legislation are giving employers unilateral powers to change things that they don't like without any input from employees; for instance, limits on a 12-hour work day, a 44-hour work week, those kinds of things. Now, overtime does not need to be paid for averaging arrangements. That's how it is drafted. It's not a good enough explanation that an employer and employee can negotiate. There is no balance of power between an employer and an employee. There's no such thing as negotiation. Their bargaining positions are different. It's clearly tilting the favour, tilting the balance in favour of CEOs. It's taking powers away from

working Albertans, working families, everyday Albertans and handing it to CEOs.

Also, before averages were based on 12 weeks, and now they will be based on 52 weeks. How on earth is this restoring balance? Again, this is just giving employers an ability that they can take into account the whole year around work and then see if there is some opportunity that they have to pay nominal overtime. It's taking rights away from Albertans. It's making it unfair for those who are in these workplaces. It's giving power to employers and taking it away from employees. It's not restoring balance; it's tilting balance in favour of employers.

It's also changing how complaints are dealt with. Madam Speaker, you would think that they would be fair in coming up with that process, but no. That process is also designed in a way that it favours employers, not employees. Now it makes, I guess, it easier for hiring 13- and 14-year-olds without needing to get a permit. I think before they go on to their talking points that we are against people learning to work early on and all those things, I think we dealt with that as well, and we have to strike a right balance of what kinds of jobs that may be appropriate for 13- and 14-year-olds. That decision needs to be made with careful consideration, that we are encouraging Albertans to learn about trades, learn about the value of work and all those things in a way that is safe for them, that is acceptable to their families, to their parents. It should never be left just up to the employer to decide.

After putting all these rules, the government thought that is still not enough: so let's put something more to help employers here, that if they break the rules, penalties can be reduced and they will have more time to pay the penalty.

In every possible way this piece of legislation is tilting everything in favour of the employer. In every possible way. One, rules are written to favour them, and then the complaint process is designed to favour them. If they break the rules, they get additional time, their penalties can be reduced, and there are, as such, no real consequences. That's how bad this piece of legislation is.

When it comes to employer groups and associations, I think they are free to seek exemption from any of these rules. If after that much hard work that the government did for employers they still think that government didn't go far enough, they can seek exemptions, and they can count on this government because they will be against employees, in favour of employers, so they are likely to get these exemptions as well.

When it comes to their talking points, it may ring very well with their base when they talk about big unions, big union bosses, and all those things, but with many of the things that we enjoy in workplaces, that we take for granted as Canadians, as Albertans, there is a history of struggle, of working people who stood up for those rights, who stood up for eight-hour work days, who stood up for overtime pay, who stood up for maternity leave, who stood up for sick leave, all those things that make a workplace fair, all those things that make a society fair. But here the government is attacking very proudly the very organizations because they think they are not on their side. Instead of government putting in any effort to balance those competing interests . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to respond to the comments made by the Member for Calgary-McCall. As well, there was debate last night, and I want to set the record straight. There appears to be a lot of misunderstanding in regard to some of the elements in this bill. I'd like to take a few moments to clarify a couple of those.

3:10

Just before I do that, I want to talk about balance. This bill provides balance. The previous government, Madam Speaker, pushed it out of balance. We heard from the hon. member on our side of the House who talked passionately about how because of Bill 17 – this was a bill that was brought in by the previous government – he had to lay off the vast majority of his staff. We are creating balance because we care about Albertans, and we want to see Albertans get back to work.

A couple of items I want to speak to. First, in terms of the averaging arrangements – I indicated this last night, but I just want to reiterate for perhaps those who didn't hear this or have a chance to view it – the 12-hour-day maximum remains in the code. That hasn't changed. And the averaging period for overtime being paid over 44 hours a week: that remains. That's in the code, and it's also in the regulations, and, Madam Speaker, it was in the regulations when the previous government in Bill 17 made all those changes to averaging arrangements. It's in the same place. That's not being removed. I would ask that the hon. members quit repeating that it's being removed because that simply is incorrect and not the case.

I also want to talk about the payment of termination benefits. The hon. members last night suggested that this would mean that an employee would go for up to 31 days without any payment. Madam Speaker, I tried to do this explanation in 45 seconds in QP today. I was not terribly successful, so I want try again now. Again, that simply is not correct. When you think about a payroll system, most people and most Albertans in this province are paid on a biweekly schedule, so every two weeks. The code requires that at the end of the work period – let's say that you start working at day 1 and you work to day 14; that's a two-week period – you have to get payment for that period 10 days after the end of the period, which is day 24. Okay. That is a normal pay cycle.

Under the previous rules for termination benefit let's say that if you were terminated on day 7, the payment would have to be on day 10, three days later. What we're suggesting and we're saying in the rules is that the payment will be done 10 days after the end of the pay period, day 24 – right? – which is the normal time that the individual would be paid, and that payment would include not only payment for time worked, but if the individual was entitled to termination benefits and annual vacation, that would be on that. That's what we're recommending. So to say that, "well, you're not going to be able to pay your rent," they wouldn't have been paid till day 24 anyway.

Now, we were concerned when we actually generated this new rule that if someone is being paid on a monthly cycle, so you actually move to the end of the pay period of a monthly cycle, that would put it out far past. That would be the next month, but that would be the normal pay – right? – and that would be too long, so we said that it had to be within a maximum of 31 days.

Let's take the example of a person who is terminated on day 7. Their normal pay period would be on 24; well, we said that the maximum would be 31. In this case, they would get paid their normal wages for the pay period, like working for weeks – this works way better with a diagram, trust me, folks – but day 1 to 7, and then a maximum, day 31, and that would require an extra payment, which employers are not keen on doing. That would require an extra payment, Madam Speaker; they would get the rest of their pay.

To say that there is no pay for a full 31 days is simply incorrect. We are making a change, and this is one of the changes where the benefits don't change, Madam Speaker. The benefits don't change. But this is one of the changes we can make where we can save employers, according to the Canadian Payroll Association,

approximately \$100 million based on their estimate of \$9 for a cheque that's outside of the payroll system. That's what the cost is. We could save employers \$100 million, and that allows employers to be able to have more cash through these difficult times to be able to hold on to employees. At the end of the day this is what this is all about, restoring balance and helping Albertans keep their jobs or helping employers hire more Albertans back to work because that's what we were elected to do.

One more issue, time permitting: I want to talk about changes that we're making for youth. Now, the members opposite are making suggestions that these changes are absolutely terrible, this is beyond the pale, we are making significant changes to the rules. Madam Speaker, that is simply not the case, and I'll have to speak to it at a later time.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the main bill?

Mr. Nally: I move that we adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: That was easy.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 22

Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to get, I guess, some final thoughts and comments around Bill 22, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020, a piece of very large legislation that is proposing changes, somewhere in the number, depending on how you want to count, of 14 to 16 different changes across six different ministries.

I do of course believe that it is prudent to mention one more time the thoughts around omnibus legislation, back on May 30, 2017, by the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

This legislation from the NDP government is omnibus in nature and would be best served if split into two distinct components to allow for faster passage of compassionate care leaves. This government is being disingenuous by lumping together changes to both the Labour Relations Code and the Employment Standards Code into one big omnibus bill.

Here we are: comments around a bill that contained changes across two different things within one ministry.

Now we're talking about multiple, 14 or 16, depending on how you want to count, across six different ministries. I can't help but wonder why the associate minister would bring forward a piece of legislation encompassing so many areas when very clearly he was against even less than that. You know, when I see omnibus legislation being brought forward by the government, I can't help but wonder: did they get the opportunity to speak to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction about bringing that type of legislation forward? He clearly has a problem with it.

Nonetheless, we are here speaking about Bill 22, 175 different pages here hiding some rather controversial changes, in my opinion. That's not to say that all of the bill has problems in it because it doesn't, Madam Speaker. There are clearly some pieces that are getting changed that are simply housekeeping in nature. But, really,

is housekeeping now being referred to as red tape reduction, or could we have not maybe placed those in a statutes amendment act?

I guess, at the end of the day, if you're trying to justify to Albertans why, over the next few years, you're going to be spending \$13 million of their hard-earned money, you have to show some kind of work at the very least because, you know, the whole ministry was supposed to reduce red tape and reduce the burden with which to be able to create jobs. So far, I haven't seen any jobs created except for maybe one, the Associate Minister of Red Tape's job. But, certainly, we have not seen any. You know, there were big hopes that the \$4.7 billion corporate handout was going to create jobs. That didn't. We saw only a loss of 55,000 jobs, so the government is going to have to make up some ground here over the next little while.

One of the other pieces that I found interesting was his comment around being more transparent to Albertans. I'm wondering how he managed to get to that considering that the rest of the country seems to think this is one of the most secretive governments in the country, so if they're working towards transparency, they might want to work just a little bit harder with regard to that.

I do of course remember that the associate minister, along with members of the government benches and members of the government caucus who served in the 29th Legislature, always had issues when it seemed like any kind of additional powers were being granted to a minister, yet here we are. We're seeing powers that are being granted to the minister – he made reference to that in his opening remarks here in third reading – around speeding up the approval of projects by not having to go through cabinet approval. That means it's left up to the minister, which means that's granting more powers to the minister. Based on what they've said in the past, that's a problem.

3:20

I always have to wonder when I hear those kinds of statements. I've always said that when you have access to some of the things that have happened in history, which – I was very fortunate enough to be able to serve in the 29th Legislature. Those kinds of comments are now in direct conflict based on what was said then. Was it really the case then that they believed those statements that they were saying back then, or was it simply a reason to just simply oppose? You know, maybe at some point in time we might have one of the ministers jump up and explain in their final comments on Bill 22 here in third reading whether that is still genuine or whether maybe it's become inconvenient moving forward.

We've also seen some changes around environmental changes. As I was mentioning, we've now seen an appointment of somebody that clearly doesn't believe that climate change is a problem. I'm sure my good friend from Edmonton-Gold Bar will probably have more to say on that in greater detail, but again here we have something conflicting. We have an individual now that's part of an organization that's supposed to oversee that sort of thing but doesn't seem to believe it's a problem, which is probably why we're seeing some challenges when it comes to bringing investment into Alberta and some of the claims around our policies with regard to climate and the environment. Bill 22 doesn't seem to help this narrative very much based on the changes that we are seeing.

I have to admit that I'm very concerned about not having cabinet approval because when we're looking at speeding up the approval process, which Bill 22 allows, I'm concerned that the consultations with First Nations peoples may get artificially sped up and not for the best. We have seen projects be delayed by the courts for that exact reason, and I'm hoping that we aren't going to be creating a situation here where we will end up facing the same sort of things by artificially speeding up this process. Those consultations failed

to happen in a robust way, and we end up yet again with more court challenges slowing down projects, which is counterproductive to what's being proposed here in Bill 22.

There were finally – and I know the members opposite love to make fun of this. Around the repealing of energy efficiency, the reality is that it was showing results. People from all over Alberta were taking advantage of this despite all the fun that is being poked at it. I mean, here we have, for instance, an agency in the war room, as it's called, that's spending \$30 million of taxpayers' money, that can't even get a logo right, not just once but twice. Yet here we are poking fun at something that Albertans wanted because they really were trying to do what they could to reduce their footprint – I certainly know that I was trying to do that within my house – and were seeing some good results from that.

Around alternative royalty agreements, I mean, here we are. We're, you know, messing around here with Albertans' money. The minister saying "Well, we want to be more transparent, yet we don't because we're not doing that," I don't think serves Albertans in the best way that they could.

There are also changes, of course, within the Business Corporations Act, which I don't see as a problem now. Initially, when this bill was presented, Madam Speaker, there wasn't a technical briefing that was given to the opposition on this, and when I first started seeing things around taking out language for insider trading, that certainly set off a lot of alarm bells for people. We now, of course, know that we were simply removing some duplicate language that was present across different pieces of legislation. You know, again, was it really red tape reduction, or could that maybe have been achieved through a statutes amendment act? I think the latter was more possible, but again if you're trying to justify the one job you've created and the \$13 million you're going to be spending, you have to show something to Albertans.

Again, changes to the Companies Act.

There were changes around the Emissions Management and Climate Resilience Act. I know that my good friend from Edmonton-Gold Bar, very knowledgeable on this subject, will have much more greater detail to share with the Assembly here in third reading on Bill 22 around that, so I don't want to spend too much time on that.

We're seeing changes to the Mines and Minerals Act which have brought some concern, I think, by Albertans around how that's going to be rolled out. What kinds of things are they going to be looking at in terms of that? Are we reducing red tape, or are we just simply making it a little bit easier for Albertans to lose out on their resources, that belong to them? Hopefully, those are not some of the things that we're going to be seeing.

We've seen some changes within the Municipal Government Act, definitely an area that I think municipalities have expressed concerns with just in general about how the government has been interacting with them, some of the things that they've been changing, and not exactly consulting widely around that. I know my friend from Calgary-Buffalo as the Municipal Affairs critic will probably have some things to share in and around that.

Madam Speaker, we did propose some amendments to this bill in the areas that I think posed some very significant concerns. Unfortunately, the government didn't feel that those were going to be useful. I think it's because of that and some of those problems that I see contained within Bill 22 that I am not in a position to be able to support this bill. I don't think that those things will be in the best interests of Albertans, but the minister has said that he'd be bringing forward some more red tape reduction things.

Oh, I almost forgot. He did mention about all the different changes that he's been making. I know that when the ministry was very first created, there was supposed to be a report that was to be

tabled for this Assembly to see and Albertans to see. Still waiting for that, and I'm certainly looking forward to some of those accomplishments the associate minister of red tape has said have happened. We'll get a chance maybe to examine them in a little bit more depth going forward.

3:30

Unfortunately, I'm not able to support this at this time, but I do look forward to seeing, hopefully, some more useful red tape reduction legislation brought forward by the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction in the future. Who knows, Madam Speaker? Maybe I might even be able to support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to offer some comments on Bill 22, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020, and I want to first start out by thanking my friend from Edmonton-Decore for providing a rather comprehensive overview of what this bill does and outlining some excellent reasons why members shouldn't support it.

I just want to take the opportunity, if I can, to dive into a little bit of the troublesome details that I find with pieces of this legislation. Specifically, I want to discuss some concerns that I have with the changes that it makes to the Emissions Management and Climate Resilience Act. I want to express some concerns with the dissolution of Energy Efficiency Alberta and address some of the concerns that my friend raised about the Mines and Minerals Act, the Oil Sands Conservation Act, and the Surface Rights Act. That is a lot to get through in the 15 minutes that are allotted to me. Of course, this is part of the strategy that this government executes time and again, to overwhelm members with these huge omnibus bills so that they can't possibly be debated thoroughly enough so that members and the public can understand the scope and breadth of all of the changes here.

I am very concerned, Madam Speaker, about the changes that have been made to the Emissions Management and Climate Resilience Act. The changes allow for the government to make loan guarantees when that previously wasn't the case. I'll tell you why I'm concerned about that. The fees collected and the monies paid out under the Emissions Management and Climate Resilience Act: it's my understanding that most of that money goes through an organization called Emissions Reduction Alberta. I fully support the work that Emissions Reduction Alberta does. They've been doing good work investing in research and development projects that are fundamental to reducing Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in the heavy industrial sector.

The problem is that the way that it was initially designed, Emissions Reduction Alberta is designed to take money now from the TIER fund and spend it on emissions reduction research and development projects, and those are not necessarily profitable ventures. When we talk about giving loan guarantees, this implies that we are lending money to these organizations in the hopes of being paid back someday, and the only way that we could expect to be paid back is if we're investing in projects that will return a profit. Madam Speaker, this is not what the projects of Emissions Reduction Alberta are necessarily designed to do.

You know, it's interesting. The latest annual report that was available from Emissions Reduction Alberta outlined some of the projects that that organization invests in. An example at the top of the list here is Imperial Oil Limited, the Kearl ConDex flue gas, heat, and water recovery project, a total project value of \$22 million. ERA committed \$6 million.

Imperial will demonstrate ConDex boiler flue gas and water recovery technology at its Kearl Oil Sands mine. The technology is designed to reduce [greenhouse gas] emissions by capturing and using exhaust heat otherwise lost to the atmosphere in oil sands mining operations.

Now, when a company like Imperial Oil invests money into these kinds of projects, obviously they think that there's potential there for it to improve the profitability of the company by reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and recovering heat and saving energy costs. That's fantastic, but the problem with these kinds of research and development projects is that there is no guarantee that the project will work out as intended and that Imperial Oil will necessarily profit from that investment. That's why government, in my view, quite rightly has a role to invest in these kinds of things. It reduces the risk to industry and encourages the kind of investment in these risky research and development projects.

Now, as I said, I have no problem with the government giving them grants to do this kind of work. I believe that not only does Imperial Oil stand to benefit, but other operators in the oil sands industry stand to benefit if these projects turn out to be what the company hopes they are to do. The problem is that we don't expect a return of our investment in these. By creating loan guarantees, we are setting up the possibility of throwing money away, falsely in the hopes of hoping to return investment. My concern with this is I think the government is trying to cover up the amount of money that it's investing into these kinds of research and development projects, calling them loan guarantees, and trying to convince the people of Alberta that we will necessarily profit off of these things.

I just wish that the government had the courage of its convictions, if they honestly believe that government should be investing in research and development in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Alberta's heavy industrial sector, to just call them grants. Why go through this song and dance of calling them loan guarantees when we have no reasonable expectation of ever being repaid? Just call them grants, say that we're supporting research and development to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the industrial sector, and leave it at that. Madam Speaker, it's concerning to me that this move actually reduces the amount of transparency that Albertans will have in money that we are investing into research and development in greenhouse gas reduction in the heavy industrial sector.

My next concern, of course, is the dissolution of Energy Efficiency Alberta. I just want to highlight some of the benefits that Energy Efficiency Alberta provided to the people of Alberta with the work that it conducted over the years. In the last annual report that was provided to the people of Alberta, Energy Efficiency Alberta indicated that with the money that it spent, a couple of hundred million dollars at most, it generated almost a billion dollars in economic growth and that it generated 5,000 new jobs.

My hon. friend for Edmonton-Decore highlighted the fact that the members of the UCP caucus continue to mock the kinds of jobs that Energy Efficiency Alberta created. They seem to think that because an Ontario company was selected to replace light bulbs and shower heads, those are for some reason not real jobs. I think that that's incredibly discouraging to the people who were working hard to carry out that program. I think it's disappointing to hear members of the UCP caucus running down the people who are doing that hard work as not having real jobs, particularly in the current economic climate, where we are desperate for any kind of job. There are more than 300,000 Albertans who have lost their jobs during the pandemic, hundreds of thousands more who have had their hours reduced, and the government is looking at a program that generated 5,000 jobs, almost a billion dollars of economic growth in the province, and saying, "No; we don't want anything to do with that," and instead are doubling down on their \$4.7 billion corporate

handout that hasn't created a single job and, in fact, led to 50,000 jobs being lost in 2019, long before the pandemic even hit.

So I don't understand why the government continues to stand up and say that they are in favour of jobs when they're taking a program that was working, demonstrated to create a billion dollars in economic growth, thousands of good jobs, and saying: we're good.

3:40

Ms Hoffman: What about EAs?

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Exactly. That's on top of this government's commitment to firing tens of thousands of public-sector workers, including more than 23,000 education assistants. It looks like they've got their target set on nurses next, whenever that becomes politically convenient for them.

When we raised these concerns with the minister and when the minister was asked by the media, "What about Energy Efficiency Alberta?" he waved his hands a little bit and said that some of the programs would continue under Emissions Reduction Alberta, but he didn't say which ones, Madam Speaker. That's a problem because Emissions Reduction Alberta, as I said, is targeted towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our heavy industrial sector. While Energy Efficiency Alberta did have the task of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our business sector, it also had important work to do in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our residential sector and in our nonprofit sector. The minister has been completely silent about what's going to happen with those programs. If he intends to cancel them, I wish that he would just get up and say that he is cancelling those programs because I have had a lot my constituents who work in the residential solar panel industry or who want to install solar panels on their houses wondering what's going to happen to those programs. They have heard absolutely nothing. I don't think the minister intends to give them false hope, but that's exactly what he's doing by implying that money that was spent through Energy Efficiency Alberta is going to be continued through Emissions Reduction Alberta.

So I hope that somebody from Executive Council can provide clarity to my constituents in Edmonton-Gold Bar and let them know what's going to happen to these residential programs. Are people going to be able to continue working installing solar panels on people's houses? Are people going to be able to continue building energy efficiency improvements into people's houses? Will my constituents still be able to take part in the energy efficiency rebates that were available to people so that they could upgrade their appliances and reduce their costs? We've asked these questions time and again, and it's incredibly frustrating that the minister refuses to provide any clarity. He knows the answer. I'm sure that Emissions Reduction Alberta has a clear understanding of what their work plan for this year is going to be. All we're asking for is the minister or somebody from Executive Council to just tell us what's going on so that we can make other plans.

Mr. Nielsen: The red tape minister can't.

Mr. Schmidt: My friend from Edmonton-Decore highlights the fact that the minister is the minister for red tape reduction. Well, what would you call red tape when you have this sort of bureaucratic uncertainty hanging over the future of these programs? Just say yes or no. That's all we're asking for. I hope that we get some clarity from members of Executive Council on that particular issue.

I do want to move on to my concerns regarding the Mines and Minerals Act, which takes the responsibility for section 9 of the Mines and Minerals Act away from the Lieutenant Governor in

Council and moves that into the minister's responsibility. Some of the things that the minister will now be responsible for include:

- (a) [entering] into a contract with any person or the government of Canada or of a province or territory respecting
 - (i) the recovery of a mineral and the processing . . .
 - (ii) the development of mines . . .
 - (ii) the storage or sequestration of substances in subsurface reservoirs;
 - (iv) the royalty reserved to the Crown . . .
 - (iv) the provision for a consideration payable to the Crown . . .
 - (vi) any matter that Minister considers to be necessarily incidental to

any of those issues.

One of the issues that I raised in question period – I asked the Premier this question – was: why is the government so keen to reduce the clarity and transparency around our royalty arrangements with regard to our natural resources? You know, in the typical, let's say, skewed framing of the question, I asked if the Premier intended to conclude these matters in backrooms and give favourable royalty deals to their friends and insiders. I was astounded, Madam Speaker, when the Premier actually admitted that that's what he was intending to do.

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

Seeing none, any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With regard to debate in third reading on Bill 22 I want to focus a little bit on the Municipal Affairs provisions within this omnibus legislation and to say that, you know, it seems like government has moved away from something that we typically did when we were in government and that is to have bill briefings with the relevant critics. As my colleagues have identified before, there's an omnibus legislation here that looks, for all intents and purposes, to touch many portfolios. I would see Municipal Affairs, Environment and Parks, Service Alberta, Justice and Solicitor General, and of course the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction's ministry.

Moving away from that long-established process of briefing critics is regrettable. When you have omnibus legislation before you like this, it tends to look like everything but the kitchen sink is thrown into it, and it's done that way to obfuscate the actual substantive changes in statutes in Alberta. It's a known practice, I guess. It started several years ago at the federal level and has been recreated here in Alberta of late to the detriment of citizens, who are confused, and the opposition, who are left scrambling to try and figure out what, in fact, is being done.

Aside from putting my objections on the record with regard to the actions of the government, I do want to, of course, focus on some of the issues that are identified on the Municipal Affairs file. The first one is with regard to emergency management, I believe. As we know, lately there have been a significant number of emergencies, and currently we're in one at this time, a public health emergency. Municipalities have a significant role with regard to acting in the best interests of their constituents, and that extends to all of us elected in this House as well.

The Municipal Affairs ministry is involved with the EMA, and on page 122 there is – I think it could be said that when Municipal Affairs has to be involved in the establishment of regulations around emergency management provisions, they often get direction, they often take the cue from the local municipality. I know in Calgary that's the case with the Calgary Emergency Management Agency, and the agency tries to work closely with

people in Municipal Affairs. Sometimes that's frustrating, Madam Speaker, because, you know, for the most part the minister is here and not on the ground on a regular basis in Calgary and would not know the situation, would not know the landscape as well as the local folks. That's the Calgary Emergency Management Agency.

3:50

I have heard in the past where there's – not disagreement. Yeah, I guess it would be disagreements around what to do, that CEMA has kind of an idea of what they want to do, what they need to do to protect their citizens, what actions they want to get the city to pass in terms of bylaws. What I see in this change is that we are recognizing to a greater degree that the local authorities can have greater control in terms of their local decision-making. The local input and the decision-making arrangements that they want to put in place towards their own governance and acting at the local level, I think, is recognized by the removal or striking out "in its establishing regulation" and substituting "by its bylaws." From a perspective of red tape reduction, getting the province out of the way of the local municipalities or local governments, still working with them, of course, but putting more of the control back in the hands of the local government, is a good thing. If that's called red tape reduction, then I agree with that.

I want to move on to page 135, another section, section 275.1. It's repealing a number of things here that I think – and perhaps if the associate minister is in the room at some point and wants to 29(2)(a), he can clarify this, but it looks to me like the removal of a section that would allow for one-third tax-free salaries of local council members throughout Alberta. Of course, they have to put in place some provisions to make that happen by resolution or bylaw, and many years ago that was the case in places like Calgary. Many, many years ago. It has been changed, and I'm not certain if it exists in other places throughout Alberta at this point in time at the local level. What this section talks about doing on page 135 is to repeal that whole area not only for local councils but also for improvement districts.

I know it's in this red tape reduction bill, but really the action was taken by the federal government. They changed the CRA rules over a year ago, and what I see happening in this bill, essentially, is mirroring the actions by the federal government. I guess that it is in this bill, but I don't see how it's red tape reduction. I think it's a mirroring of actions that the order of government at the federal level, that controls the way taxes are levied, changed. So that's changed as well. It makes me wonder to a degree how much of this bill, this omnibus legislation that is called red tape reduction, is in fact actions that are mirroring the work of other orders of government, particularly the federal government in this case. Those two things jumped out at me, I guess, when I looked at this bill. I think anything that can facilitate local governance and decision-making and appropriate actions quickly at the local level is in the best interest of Albertans who are experiencing emergencies. So that's good.

But the other thing, I think, is that it's being called something that it's actually not. I know that the associate minister stood up and talked about the number of acts that were affected by the actions in this bill, and I know that this bill is a result of the UCP platform as well. I think back to the days when members of this caucus were on the other side and the things that we brought forward either as individual ministers or in the miscellaneous statutes acts. We took action that didn't create an associate minister, a ministry. We took action, and we passed, as people can recall, dozens and dozens and dozens of bills in this House over four years, and we did that in the best interests of streamlining government.

We did that in the best interest of trying to get to the nub and the heart of what's important for Albertans, and we acted – I can remember, you know, as a member of cabinet looking at the legislative agenda over the course of four years and kind of planning that out on a year-by-year basis and taking time to prioritize, essentially, what needed to be done. We always found that there was far more on our plate needing to come into this House than we were able to schedule, but we did miscellaneous statutes acts in this House repeatedly. A number of different ministers brought different acts to this House through the course of their tenure. If you dug into those acts, you could see where there was action to address greater efficiency in government, to address greater effectiveness in the way that government did its work. Madam Speaker, without putting too fine a point on it, we acted in a way that was responsible and took care of much of the red tape that was brought to us by administration, by the public service that needed to be addressed.

I think I will soon take my seat, but I just wanted to reflect on the way things were done under our government and how I think that we addressed a wide range of changes necessary without the use of omnibus legislation. We ensured that that legislation that we brought forward was always focused on the fewest number of regulations and policies as we could possibly put in. There was no desire to make government bigger than it was. We had 22 ministries, if I recall, at last count. We started out with 12 ministers, and they doubled up, and they focused on the issues in their ministries.

There were a lot of things to focus on because many, many issues had been stalled by the previous PC government. If you recall, there were a number of PC governments towards the end of that 44-year run under a number of different Premiers, so the public service didn't have an opportunity to come into the House with much legislation. We hit the ground running. We took care of a lot of the backlog of legislation that was necessary, but there were no more regulations and policies put in place than were needed at the time.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'm going to return to my chair. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

4:00

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a couple of long nights here. I hate to say it; I'm a little bit tired. When I get a little bit tired, I tend to hear things wrong. I try to get some coffee. I do that, and then I try to wake up. Well, there are a couple of things that caught my attention. I'm looking around the room, and I think my colleagues are hearing it, too. Again, we're down the rabbit hole or through the looking glass or wherever we're at, and we're going back through the wayback machine. All of a sudden it's fairy tales and pixie dust. Everything was working out great. I'm hearing the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar actually taking credit for the program they had where they're getting the folks from Ontario to come out and change light bulbs and shower heads and saying: but we're creating jobs; well, we created jobs, so it was a good program; we were doing a lot of good stuff. We're talking about, you know, job losses, and we're talking about red tape. You know, I've started calling it orange tape because, honestly, there are so many things out there and so many reasons.

We had the Member for Highwood up here, you know, last night speaking about why he was here, all these issues that took place in the economy, why we actually showed up, gave up what we were normally doing to become politicians. It wasn't because of the fairy tales and pixie dust, as if everything was sunshine and lollipops. Quite contrary.

One hundred and eighty thousand people went out of work. You shut down a bunch of coal mines. You changed regulations. Where I'm sitting up by the Hutterite colony and talking about what it took to produce eggs, eggs of all things, as the gentleman put it, the boss of the farm up there, Mike, up at the Rochfort colony, he goes: "Same chicken, same egg. Nothing has changed in my barn, but you know what has changed? The amount of regulation that I have to try to do this. We used to be able to take care of it with one person part-time kind of doing that." He says, "Now we've got a \$45,000-a-year person to take care of all documentation required – you guessed it – to produce the same darn egg." But what did increase? The number of inspectors that came out. This is the compounding of what we call red tape. But, for you, for your benefit, for the gentleman from Calgary, I'm going to start calling it orange tape. Then they'll see what they actually did.

I had, no word of a lie, a group out from Sherwood Park. They're number two to Stantec in environmental consulting. By the way, they used to work for the government. These are the guys that retired, packaged out, started their own business about 15, 20 years ago. They're number two, Millennium environmental services. So I'm going around campaigning, and all of a sudden my network is coming out and telling me all the issues and everything that's going sideways. It wasn't just pipelines. No. That would have been too easy. It was through every flipping industry that they touched. When it comes down to the environmental side of things, they were shutting down coal. Millennium has a client up in Grande Cache. They've got metallurgical coal.

Here's the irony of it, Madam Speaker. They were going out and spending money on infrastructure, smearing dirt in ditches, putting these little signs up there saying: we're extending culverts. They didn't take care of the road maintenance. They changed all that type of thing. They didn't do tons of capital projects. They weren't planning out in advance. Here is how ironic it gets. They're going to start heckling because, you know, this is my version of history, not sunshine and fairy dust and pixie dust like they like to somehow see. They actually were against the coal mine. It was already in the hopper to get approved.

Now, Millennium environmental services get paid as a consultant to try to get people through – through – the process. They actually try to get things approved. If anyone would benefit from a convoluted, backwards type system that was hardest to get through, it would be a consultant that gets paid money for it, but you know what, Madam Speaker? It was even difficult for them. I asked them: "What has changed? What changed since you used to be part of those departments?" It was culture. The culture had changed. They used to be under the direction to get things approved, to actually approve things and make sure the industry did it right. Now the culture is: stop it, make them ask two or three times, and get them to spend a bunch of money.

Here's the irony. Again, coming back to Grande Cache, money is being spent on that highway project going up there at the same time they're trying to shut down the coal mine to which the highway was being built. And what happened – and what happened – was: six months to get your Energy minister in there to get a meeting with them.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, comments through the chair.

Mr. Getson: I'm sorry. You're right. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it took them six months to actually get the then Energy minister to the table to explain to them that there was a difference between thermal coal and metallurgical coal. They had to call it steel coal so they can understand why they were shutting it down because they were fixated on shutting down Keephills.

This is the type of stuff that was taking place. This was taking place. They were – I don't know – really good at protesting. They actually hired a guy from the Sierra Club or something like that. I'm not sure who that fellow was, but he ended up jumping on his own sword before we could get to him because that was the thing. They were really good at stopping the projects. They were really good at doing that. Consultation? I mean, you just name it. There was one thing after another. One thing after another, Madam Speaker.

We are criticized in here for going after red tape when it takes you 10 years to get a project approved and you're losing project certainty because nobody knows what the heck we're doing because of red tape.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate in third reading of Bill 22? Have you spoken, hon. member?

Mr. Sabir: No, not yet.

The Deputy Speaker: No? Okay. My apologies. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill. Again, I will start from the very beginning. The Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act: the title of this is misleading because it has way more in this legislation than red tape.

[The Speaker in the chair]

It's making fundamental changes to how we manage our parks, how we manage our public lands, how we manage our resources and does things that have bearing on the environment. I think we do know this government's record on the environment and all of those things, but at least Albertans deserve an honest conversation on all of these issues, and I think hiding it in a red tape reduction piece of legislation is deeply concerning. It's deeply troubling, and it gives a false impression that the changes contained in this piece of legislation are somehow in any way, shape, or manner red tape.

For instance, I think my colleagues mentioned earlier that this bill dissolves Energy Efficiency Alberta, and I guess it sends a very strong and clear message about what the government thinks about energy efficiency. They've been using one example of light bulbs, mocking one program, but there were many other programs that we never heard them talk about at all. There were programs that were helping indigenous communities. There were a number of programs that I can point to that indigenous communities benefited from. There was retrofitting on their reserves. There were solar panels on their reserve communities. There were almost 80 different programs, initiatives that were within the indigenous communities alone designed to achieve energy efficiency. They're getting rid of that program altogether. It's not red tape reduction. It's an attack on these programs within indigenous communities that were generating employment, that were helping them achieve energy efficiency. Just taking one example of light bulbs and spinning it out of proportion: I don't think that that's the kind of decorum and debate we should have in this Legislature.

We should talk about the real program and real impacts. The data is very clear. Sure, members are entitled to their opinion but not to their facts. The facts are that Energy Efficiency Alberta generated \$850 million in economic growth in 2017 and 2019. Government has not generated a cent in economic growth ever since they've been in government. Energy efficiency alone has generated more money, more revenues, than what this government generated in the whole year. Every dollar that was invested returned \$3.20. It's a way better return than what government got on their \$4.7 billion

corporate handout. After handing that out, we lost 50,000 jobs under this government's watch. Companies took money and invested elsewhere, created jobs elsewhere. In Calgary alone, in our city, which was already struggling because of the lower energy prices, just one company, Husky alone, laid off 371 Albertan people. Another company just rolled up, changed their name, and went down to the States.

4:10

Energy efficiency alone has created more jobs, more economic impact than what the government's total policy has so far done in their first year, what their \$4.7 billion handout did in the first year. Just getting rid of that program and that agency altogether: I don't think that decision is based in facts. This decision is just ideologically motivated, and we do know that the government doesn't really believe in environment and climate change science. That's how we are seeing this hidden in the red tape reduction bill.

There are some other changes that are contained in it. The most significant one is the change that they are making to the Oil Sands Conservation Act, a very important piece of legislation that establishes a regulatory regime to administer and manage the oil and gas resources that are owned by Albertans for their collective benefit. What they are doing is that they are removing cabinet's opportunity to impose any kind of oversight on the decision relating to oil and gas development. They're handing it to the AER. With the kinds of appointments they are doing to the AER, I think it's also concerning, and it's concerning for many other reasons as well. They are not cutting red tape by handing out this opportunity for providing oversight on behalf of Albertans on their resource development.

Insofar as government's obligations are concerned with respect to indigenous communities, I think they remain. A very respected professor of the University of Calgary, Professor Nigel Bankes, has also commented on that, that this is not going to help them reduce any kind of red tape or any kind of obligations that they have under the Constitution. I would read a couple of comments into *Hansard* that Professor Nigel Bankes said with respect to the resource development and indigenous communities and obligations government has to indigenous communities. He says: "These duties of the Crown are just that, constitutional duties. They are not red tape; there is no red tape to be cut." There is no red tape to be cut. They are just sliding a change within this bill that nobody will find out.

This is a fairly significant change, and on top I think they didn't do the homework. Government didn't do the homework. Government didn't do the proper legal analysis. Professor Bankes says, "This does not and cannot mean that these obligations have just disappeared." Earlier the minister said that just doing this alone will reduce 10 months of the timeline. How? Help us understand. We all want resource development to move in a timely fashion. Just claiming that it will reduce 10 months of the time from approval is not enough. Give some rationale. Give some reason. Now, we know that by doing that, nothing changes insofar as government obligations are concerned.

Again I'm quoting from the analysis that Professor Nigel Bankes did.

In sum, the removal of Cabinet from the decision-making process under sections 10 and 11 of the OSCA [Oil and Gas Conservation Act] will remove the need for an additional approval and the attendant four-month or so "delay" that this might entail, but it will not simplify or shorten the steps that the Crown needs to take to discharge its constitutional responsibilities. Furthermore, insofar as there will be no formal Cabinet decision to authorize the project, Cabinet will lose the opportunity to put its best foot forward and provide a reasoned decision . . . as to how it thinks

that it has discharged those constitutional obligations, and in particular its duty to consult obligations.

If anything is to be learned from the history of these projects, whether it's Kinder Morgan, whether it's Keystone XL, whether it's the pipeline going towards the east, Energy East, all these pipelines are case studies that when we walk roughshod on indigenous constitutional rights, we end up in the courts. It's the obligation of the government to consult with indigenous communities, do their due diligence, and then approve this resource development. In this piece of legislation in the name of red tape they are just losing that opportunity to provide that oversight.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my chair.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the Member for Calgary-McCall.

Are there others?

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 32

Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity has some time remaining should he choose to use it.

Mr. Nally: I'll just adjourn debate.

The Speaker: My guess is that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition would like to join in the debate.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to be able to get this opportunity to rise and speak today in the House about the implications of Bill 32 on the people of Alberta. I'm sure it will come as no surprise to you or to others who've been listening that our caucus is emphatically opposed to this bill, and we are opposed because it represents a scathing and historic attack on the rights of working Albertans. It represents an attack on the affordability and incomes of working Albertans. It is particularly focused on undermining the rights of vulnerable Albertans.

4:20

In addition to that, it is also very much an Americanized union-busting bill which is focused on undermining the rights of working people, typically but not always more vulnerable working people, to come together and through the act of coming together to assert an ability to engage, if not with equal power, at least with increased power as they attempt to preserve their workplace safety, as they attempt to advocate for wages that allow them to work and live above the poverty line, and as they attempt to come together in order to have their voices heard in a larger context. All these things that Bill 32 attacks ultimately undermine the rights of Alberta working people. It is really very unfortunate and definitely historic.

I read one commentator just the other day who said, you know, that prior to this bill and prior to 2015, when our government brought Alberta's labour laws into the mainstream of labour legislation, both union and non-union, Alberta had had a regime of laws governing the rights of working people that was in the low end of the mainstream, in fact, the lowest. I mean, no question, we had a history of giving the lowest number of rights to working people, but it was still within the Canadian mainstream. You could sort of

see the Alberta set of laws from the centre of the Canadian labour law mainstream.

But what we see here with Bill 32 is – wow, that's importing some serious Americanization. Whether it's American union-busting or whether it's trying to import American rules around the role of big money in political and civil society discourse, it is an extremely extreme importation of American values into the regime that governs the rights of non-union working people, union working people, and civil society discourse, including the activity of political parties.

Now, the members opposite try to argue that this is a bill that's all about supporting job creators. Let's be very clear. The only jobs this will create are jobs for lawyers. Now, I will grant you that, you know, if I were dean of a law school anywhere in Canada, I would say: well, you know, the economy is slow, but if you're looking for work, there, students, move to Alberta because every day that UCP government goes into the Legislature, they pass legislation that's going to spawn years of work for lawyers because it is so consistently in breach of the Constitution, division of powers, and/or the Charter. It seems as though this government sees the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as red tape. It seems as though they see the Constitution of our country as red tape. You know, I guess that's their right, but certainly that's what they're doing, and nowhere do you see that more clearly than in the introduction of Bill 32.

What I'd like to talk about, I guess, is primarily in two sections. I'd like to talk about, first, how this bill is a profound attack on affordability and security for all working people, whether they are union or non-union, in terms of how it impacts the Employment Standards Code. I say union or non-union because, obviously, if the government creates a regime where working people have ever-decreasing access to basic fundamental rights in the workplace, then that means that unions, whose primary job, one at which they are very successful, much to the chagrin of members opposite, is to protect working people, then unions have to work that much harder. If in the overall non-unionized sector we don't have a minimum wage, if we don't have a right to get paid for the work that we do, if we don't have a right to get notice when we're unlawfully fired, if we don't have a right to be paid sick leave when we're following the orders of the chief medical officer of health, if those things aren't happening in the overall workplace, then obviously the rights of unionized people are also undermined because they have to then negotiate much lower standards.

I guess, you know, the members opposite think: hey, the lower the standards for 80 per cent of people, then maybe that other 20 per cent or 5 per cent or 2 per cent will make more. I guess that's how things look good for them. I should say that the starting point for our caucus is that economic security, economic stability, economic prosperity, economic success: none of it is real if it is not also inclusive of equity and equality. If you create an economy where one person can make billions and billions and billions of dollars and everybody else goes to work unsafe and earning so little that they have to stop at the food bank on the way home, I don't care what the GDP of that economy is, it's not a successful economy.

An economic plan and a plan for economic growth that is premised on chasing that profoundly unequal economy, notwithstanding what may or may not be the size of the GDP, is destined to fail. It should especially fail in a country like Canada and a province like Alberta where we can and should do better and where all citizens of this province should look to a government that sees every citizen's right to have a safe workplace, a fairly compensated workplace, a workplace that gives them a means so that they and their family can be secure and live a good life and plan for their

future. That's what they should expect from all members of the Assembly that governs their province, and they should especially expect it from members of the government side.

Unfortunately, what we have seen time and time again is that we have a government that doesn't see that. We have a government that defines economic growth and economic success as just making sure someone makes money, and if they make money at the expense of other citizens in the process and as a result of oppressing and reducing the rights of other citizens, that's a win. That's a win for these guys. It's not a win for our caucus. That is why an economic policy like what we've seen with this government, that's focused on a \$4.7 billion-plus-plus-plus handout to primarily foreign corporations that take that money and pay it to shareholders that are not citizens of this province, that is not a win. It's especially not a win when, to pay for that, you do things like fire the educational assistants of the three children I described today, notwithstanding that the Education minister refused to talk about their circumstances or acknowledge her role and the role of this government in withdrawing fundamental, quality-of-life supports for those people. That's a loss. That's what it is when you build your idea of economic growth and prosperity around notions of inequality as an inherent value worthy of pursuit.

Bill 32: let me just start from that point. Inherent in Bill 32 is this desire to ensure inequality and to pursue inequality as a value within and throughout the province of Alberta. Of course, we do that by attacking the most vulnerable workers. Of course, members in our caucus have already identified how over the last three or four months we have heard about how the most vulnerable workers were in fact the heroes of our province during COVID-19. By "vulnerable" I mean both in terms of their employment rights and also in terms of their safety. In terms of their employment rights we see people who were working at gas stations, working in grocery stores, delivering our SkipTheDishes, you know, doing all those things that keep the rest of us comfortable, those folks.

4:30

Then we hear about those folks in health care who went to work each and every day to make sure that either we were safe from the pandemic, that we were kept healthy in the course of dealing with other challenges, or that those most vulnerable Albertans to the pandemic were kept safe. All those people in health care went to work every day. Those are people we should be celebrating and lifting up. Instead, the minute there's a little bit of an eye in the hurricane, a little bit of time to run through legislation, what does this government do? It rams through legislation to attack both those health care workers, many of whom are unionized, and many of those other vulnerable workers, only a small portion of whom are unionized, all of whom require basic rights within their workplace.

Let me just talk a little bit more – first of all, before I get into talking about what this means as far as its attack on unionized workplaces and union members and the freedom of speech that all Albertans should enjoy, let me just renew and review the specific attacks on the pocketbooks of regular Albertans, as I've already explained, both directly, because they're non-union, and indirectly to those who are unionized, because unions will have to work that much harder to negotiate improvements for their members.

What we have, of course, are a number of changes. We have, of course, the primary matter, which actually did feature in the discussions between our party and the UCP in the last provincial election. Unfortunately, they didn't feature terribly honestly. We looked at the UCP platform, and we looked at what they were talking about doing with respect to averaging agreements, and we sounded the alarm that this government was going after the overtime of roughly 300,000 to 400,000 working Albertans. Now, at the time, the

Premier was a candidate, and he denied that that was the consequence of the proposed averaging agreements. Nonetheless, the fact of the matter is that it is the actual consequence of the proposed averaging agreements.

In the fall, when they brought in the first round of legislation to bring in these averaging agreements – and for those of you listening at home, let me just explain this in a little bit of detail. The way the Employment Standards Code used to read was that if you worked past a certain number of hours in a day or past a certain number of hours in a week, you received a premium for being asked to work that extra amount of time, either time and a half or double time. That's basically the thing.

Then these folks talked about putting in place averaging agreements which would allow for the employer to say: "You know what? We're not going to do this on the basis of how many hours you work in a day, and we're not going to do this on the basis of how many hours you work in a week. We're going to do this on the basis of, you know, how many hours you work in a month." Of course, what that allows is for, you know, a 60-hour week and a 60-hour week, and no overtime is paid. Then you're just taking time off at straight time in the last week of the month.

That's a lot of money, because there are a lot of folks – we did the work. I don't remember it offhand right now, but if I recall correctly, it was, I think, between 250,000 and 350,000 Albertans who get paid overtime at some point in any given year. That's how many people were having money taken from their pocket potentially.

Now, at the time, in the fall, this government said: "Oh, no, no, no. This will only happen if they agree to it, because employees want flexibility, too, and they'll want to come together in their Kumbaya moment with their bosses . . .

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

Ms Notley: . . . and they want to be able to agree to earn less.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order has been called.

Point of Order Items Previously Decided

Mr. Nally: On 23(f). While I always appreciate the thoughtful pontification on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition – "debates any previous vote of the Assembly unless it is that Member's intention to move that it be rescinded" – it's starting to look an awful lot like that.

The Speaker: This is not a point about order. This is an outrageous assertion. The hon. Leader of the Opposition: this is her first opportunity to speak to the motion. She has up to 90 minutes to do it.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Debate Continued

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anyway, I'm just trying to get into a bit of the history behind one of the more heinous elements of the one subsection of this bill that takes money away from working people, just so the folks at home can sort of know what we're talking about.

In the fall, when they brought in the legislation to engage with averaging agreements, they said: "No, no. It's all by agreement. It's all fine. No one's going to be forced to do anything that they don't want to do. They will only give up their overtime pay if it's convenient for them." We at the time said: "Yeah, right. Everybody

finds it convenient to get paid less. Uh-huh.” But, whatever. That was their language. That was the messaging. Then, of course, we see the changes to that in this legislation. The changes are twofold. First of all, the language around agreement is completely gone, and it’s just simply: employees have to be given notice of the arrangement. So it’s very clear that it is now a one-sided imposition of a new set of rules.

The other thing which is really quite offensive is that we’re no longer averaging over – I think I said a month last time; I was incorrect – 12 weeks; we’re now averaging over a year. So literally – literally – an employer could make someone work 80 hours a week for six months in an averaging agreement that the employee did not agree to, get very little notice of that change, and not get paid a cent of overtime. Good Lord. The amount of money that that means we are taking out of the pockets of seasonal construction workers, particularly those in the non-union sector, is astronomical. What a profound attack on the pocketbooks of regular working Albertans. It is overwhelming.

Again, we raised this in the election. We got the: “Oh, no. NDP. Fear, smear. Fear, smear. Blah, blah, blah.” No, folks. It’s right there in Bill 32, exactly as we explained it, and that’s exactly what they’re doing here. At a time like this, why do we go after non-unionized, seasonal, hourly employees to get money out of their pockets? I can’t imagine. I guess because when times are tough, the rich get more, and the rest of us have to shoulder the burden. I guess that’s actually one of the values. It goes back to my original comment, which is that one of the fundamental values of this government is that inequality is a value that you should actively pursue, and that’s why I say that Bill 32 represents a very, very well-crafted legislative pursuit of inequality.

Now, a number of other things that are included in here: I’ll let my colleagues go into them in more detail throughout the debate, and I’m sure I’ll have a chance to do it again at much length in future days and weeks.

Certainly, we’ve lost the need to pay out employees who are terminated within 10 days. Now the employer can wait up to a month. Again, quite shocking. Just within the last couple of months, we saw reports, you know, nonpartisan research reports – I know that facty things are not the favourite of the members opposite. Nonetheless, it was a report from, I think, the Bank of Canada, something of that ilk, that suggested that – what was it? – about 60 per cent of Albertans end the month with less than \$200 in their bank account. So if you fire somebody and you now say, “Oh, it’s okay; they’ll get their money sooner or later; they’ve just got to wait a month” – you know, that’s about as tone deaf to the reality of the majority of working Alberta families as the tone-deafness that we saw with the decision to delay AISH payments for a whole month because it helped the government play around with the size of their deficit in the 2019-2020 annual report.

Now, ultimately, as it turned out, that was the least of their problems, but at the time there was a decision to save money in 2019-2020 by pushing off about – I can’t remember what it was – millions and millions of dollars in payment to people on AISH with no regard to the fact that those people had nowhere near the financial discretion to accommodate that kind of unexpected delay.

4:40

The same thing is embedded again in this decision to streamline and make things easier for employers’ payroll processes by putting off termination pay, which, to be clear, is money owed to the employee. They’ve already done the work. They are already owed the money, but putting it off for a whole month as though somehow that will have no impact on how they run their household finances: just silly.

Now, another thing that we’ve seen is that a temporary layoff can happen much, much longer before an employee’s right to receive termination pay is triggered. Once again, the same arguments that I’ve outlined about why that’s unfair and tone deaf apply there.

We’ve also seen with the temporary layoffs another significant problem, and that’s this. It used to be that when you got a temporary layoff, the employer had to give you two weeks’ notice. Now, if the employer didn’t give you two weeks’ notice, the common law applies in the absence of any specification in the act. That means that in lieu of notice, you get pay. So you either get two weeks’ notice or you get two weeks’ pay. Now, what this government did was that they removed the obligation for the employer to give the notice to the temporarily laid off employee.

Let us all think for a moment about the circumstances in which we are currently living. We have very hard-working employers who are trying to get things going again, who open and close, who open and close. We have their employees, who want to be back at work, who go back to work, and then they get laid off, and they go back to work, and they get laid off. There’s not a soul in this room, I hope, that doesn’t understand that we are probably going to see and be living in those circumstances for at least another 12 months. What that means is that those most vulnerable workers, the ones that we rely on to bring us our SkipTheDishes, you know, if and when we have to lock down again, can get laid off and then not get any notice where once they would have gotten paid notice. Yes, it’s flexibility for employers, but what it also is – what we’re doing is that we’re asking the most vulnerable people to pay the cost of that.

Let me just say here, when we’re speaking about employers, that our caucus actually did, starting, I guess now, about two to three months ago, consistently roll out a number of proposals to support small-business owners throughout COVID. We proposed multiple different types of grants. We proposed a rent support system, which still has not been put in place. We proposed a ban on evictions, which has already disappeared. We proposed numerous strategies that would support small-business owners and allow them to keep their businesses viable during the challenges of COVID-19.

Now, 90 per cent of the things that we proposed were ignored. They finally came up with the one \$5,000 grant, which was a drop in the bucket compared to what we were proposing be offered to small-business owners and significantly less than what you see in other provinces the same size as Alberta. They never properly acted on protection from eviction or any kind of protection or support for rent because they signed onto a federal program which was designed to fail, and every small-business person has told them that it was designed to fail, and everyone knows that it’s not going to be accessed. Basically, we are knowingly failing to support small businesses.

Let me be very clear. We’ve been very seized with the need to support small businesses and their ability to stay open. The key is that we do not think that their minimum wage, part-time, barely employed workers are the ones who should be doing that work. We think that we should be coming together to do that, and instead of giving \$4.7 billion so that Husky can invest in Wisconsin or Encana can move back to Texas, perhaps we should ask those folks that are still making profits to pay their fair share so that we can help support other players within the economy and make sure that those who are struggling the most can continue to pay their rent. That’s what we are suggesting. Again, equality: fundamental value over here. Inequality: ongoing pursuit over there.

Now, there are a number of other things that we see in there: reductions in rights with respect to group terminations, with respect to payroll deductions, with respect to rest periods, with respect to pay for statutory holidays, with respect to time off and leaves. All

of them are ways in which to both reduce rights and take money and premiums out of the pockets of working people.

The last thing that I am going to talk about here in that part of this bill that is so objectionable to us is the change with respect to how this government makes variances and exemptions from the fundamentally super basic, super this-is-the-bare-minimum rules included within Alberta's Employment Standards Code. It used to be the case that it was a relatively rare situation where an employer would go to the minister to ask for variances and exceptions. Sorry. An individual employer could go to the director for short-term variances, exemptions, and any kind of group request had to go to the minister. It had to align with certain criteria, and it had to happen for a certain period of time. Now we're just blowing the doors off of that. We can now have, say, the restaurant association wander into the director's office, who has no guidance for how or when or if they should provide this exemption, and they can literally provide an exemption from paying the minimum wage.

Should you say, "Oh, that's ridiculous. You're just seeing ghosts," well, let us just remember that last fall this was the government that actually passed legislation the actual consequence of which is that farm workers no longer have a statutory right to receive a minimum wage of any type in this province. We're the only province in the country that has no minimum wage for farm workers, and that is under the oversight and the direction of this government. Pursuit of inequality: that's what we've got over there.

If folks over there think that I am trying, then, to make up what will happen, I only look at the record, and what we know is that they've now given themselves the ability to wildly provide variances and exemptions from a whole range of rights that workers would otherwise have under the Employment Standards Code without the benefit of a ministerial order, without the benefit of public oversight, and also in a way that can be renewed indefinitely. Why? Because folks over there don't fundamentally believe in the right of all Albertans to have minimum rights in the workplace. They are expendable. They are tools for a much smaller group of Albertans to exploit, and because that's what they think, that's what this bill reflects.

Let me talk a little bit now about the other part of the bill, which, as I said, represents an unprecedented and historic, not only in Alberta but across the country, attack on the rights of working people to come together to improve their rights at work, to engage in civil discourse, and to ensure that they are able to keep safe. Now, of course the folks over there have obviously done a lot of research as they were getting ready to do this little piece, and they've come up with, you know, the occasional thing that certain folks have said. They decided that that is the far-reaching reason why they had to make this fundamental attack on the constitutional and Charter rights of every working person in this province. Suffice to say, that's ridiculous.

It is a profound distraction, and it's a distraction on two levels. It's a distraction in a larger way from the fact that this government has failed and is failing abysmally to meet even one of the three promises that they made to Albertans. They promised jobs. Before the pandemic we were down 50,000. Since the pandemic, you know, it's off the charts. They promised an economy. Well, the economy shrunk in the last half of the year of their first year in power. They promised pipelines. Well, we've rolled the dice on a fifty-fifty bet with \$7 billion of Albertans' dollars on one pipeline and have done nothing with respect to any others. So they're not being terribly successful. That's the understatement of the planet, probably, but let's just leave it at that. It's not been working out so well.

4:50

Albertans are stressed, and they are angry, and I highly doubt that there's a member opposite that hasn't heard that as they go about their daily activities within their communities and talk to their constituents. So they need to distract. They're distracting generally by picking a bogeyman that they can attack because that's a classic strategy of this government. It's a distraction from that perspective.

It's also a distraction, though, from what's really happening with this piece of legislation in terms of the multiple levels at which they are attacking the rights of working people, every working person. I say every working person because, folks – again, to review, I appreciate that folks over there see the Constitution and the Charter as red tape, which they would rather do without, but notwithstanding that, the Constitution and the Charter say that each and every Albertan has the right to join a union. In engaging in this broad-level, union-busting, Americanized attack on unions, the likes of which have not been seen anywhere else in this country ever, they are attacking, in fact, the fundamentally constitutionally protected right of every single Albertan. Nonetheless, they are doing it, but they are also trying to do a great deal more.

Let me just talk for a minute about unions because, you know, guys over there, I appreciate – the people over there; my apologies. The people over there think unions are evil. I don't know why. I'm not exactly sure what happened. Quite honestly, you've just got to read. I could probably grab you 20 tweets in the next 10 minutes . . .

Ms Hoffman: Or *Hansard* from last night.

Ms Notley: . . . or *Hansard* or whatever to make my case. But definitely they are not big fans.

Let me just give you a bit of an example about some of the things that unions have contributed to this province and this country. Well, you know, it's kind of trite, but it's worthwhile saying: the weekend. Worker safety, a work week, growing but not yet achieved equity for women, preservation of basic human rights, the right to be free from discrimination in the workplace: these are all things that unions have fought for forever.

But one of the things this bill does, of course, is that it attempts to shut down the ability of unions to engage in civil discourse. Let's be very clear. I'll read later on some quotes from a constitutional law expert about how very intentional and how all the research shows and all experts will say that the decision of this government to adopt an opt-in dues structure versus an opt-out is a very intentional decision to essentially silence the ability of unions to engage in social discourse.

Nonetheless, they've decided they distrust unions, they don't like unions, and they want to stop them from speaking and engaging in social discourse. They want that to especially be the case for anything related to general social causes, charities or NGOs, contributing to anything that is affiliated with a political party, anything else by regulation. Let's just be clear that that's also in there. If that's not a red flag the size of three tanks, I don't know what else is. Anyway, these are the things that the government wants to engage their authority on, to limit and control with respect to the activity of unions and their engagement in those things.

I just want to, again for the benefit of folks who might be listening at home, give some other examples of things that unions have done that are maybe a little bit farther outside the basic workers' rights envelope, a little bit farther. Now, of course, I've already talked about the minimum wage. I've already talked about human rights. Interesting: in the 1940s it was unions that actually were part of the first campaign to bring in employment insurance and family allowance, because we were seeing at the time profound poverty

levels amongst older Canadians as the economy recovered from the Depression and the Second World War.

People were in the streets and they had no homes and they couldn't eat, and it was devastating. Unions at that time played an incredible role lobbying the government and, in so doing, brought in the first version of employment insurance and family allowance, something that was designed to ensure that Canada was not a place where poverty was built into our very fibre and inequality was built into our very fibre.

One of the things that I like to talk about because of course I worked there for a period of time but also because it's absolutely so close to my heart is medicare. As members here probably may or may not recall, their predecessor party, the PCs, tried on two separate occasions to bring in privately funded health care. The Premier likes to pretend that, "Oh, you know, people have always complained about that, and then it never happened," and we're just hysterical and we're seeing things and blah, blah, blah. No. Again, sorry. I hate to break it to you. The legislation was in black and white. They clearly introduced legislation. They clearly had PowerPoints. The documents were there. They were absolutely working on bringing in privately funded health care to this province. No question. There's not a soul on the planet – I would go into any court of law and make that case, and I would win because the facts are there. That's what they tried to do.

Starting in I can't remember if it was the late '80s, early '90s unions started fighting back, and several unions started contributing to creating an organization called Friends of Medicare. At the time it was a nonpartisan group that was solely focused on protecting publicly funded health care for Albertans, and thank God they were there because we had a government that twice tried to bring credit-card medicine into Alberta. Again, going back to my theme, this is a group that pursues inequality as a principle objective. Twice unions were part of and, in some cases, led the fight to protect our public health care in this province. That's the kind of thing that this government doesn't want to see them do anymore. It makes me wonder what their plans are going forward in terms of privately funded health care in this province, but that's the kind of thing that they are trying to shut down.

What else have unions done? Well, most recently we saw UFCW fighting to save the lives of their members at Cargill. I like to think that fewer people died than did because of the intervention of the UFCW. It is unfortunate that they weren't heard earlier. That's what they do.

In addition to that, with respect to not only their members but other working people who worked in grocery stores, UFCW fought hard to put in safety precautions so that when we all gathered together in grocery stores, because that was something we were all still doing through the pandemic, there were safety standards there, and we didn't see outbreaks in those stores. Was that about bargaining a collective agreement? No. That was about protecting the safety of each and every Albertan. That's what that union did.

AUPE steelworkers spoke up about what was going on in long-term care over and over and over again. I remember at the very beginning – I kind of think it was still in March – we started calling on this government to replicate what was happening in B.C., to put in a series of measures that would stop the explosion of infections in our long-term care centres. We were doing that alongside several different unions, both those two unions and others. Not alongside together, but we just all happened to be making the same call. We knew that it was not only about protecting the workers in those long-term care centres; it was about protecting our aunts, our uncles, our grandparents, our parents, disabled Albertans who live in those long-term care centres. That's what it was about protecting,

and their voice was the voice that was out there calling for these things.

5:00

Now, there had to be a lot of voices before this government finally moved. They moved about four or five weeks, if I recall, certainly, after B.C., so we saw, you know, a growth in cases in those places that, frankly, I think we probably could have avoided. Nonetheless, that voice was there. It's a voice that Albertans need to be able to hear, and it's a voice that this bill shuts down.

Another one, much less political but also important. When I worked for the Health Sciences Association, they used to – this is in B.C.; it's not dissimilar here in Alberta, but I'll just speak to my own experiences in B.C. – give hundreds of thousands of dollars every year to Run for the Cure. Is that a political organization? Nope. Is that attacking Jason Kenney? Nope. Is it barred by this government, by this act? Yeah.

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Notley: Oh, my great apologies.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition will know that the use of names in the Chamber is unacceptable.

Ms Notley: I'm sorry. I got ahead of myself, and my apologies to the Premier, to the Speaker, and to members of the House.

Is that attacking the Premier? No. It is simply raising money for Run for the Cure. This bill attacks that because somehow the millions of dollars that are raised every year by unions that support charities are tainted. I don't know. I mean, I don't know how many charities you guys spoke to who said: "Please, for the love of God, stop the unions from donating to us, stop the unions from fundraising for us, stop the unions from having barbecues that support our causes. Oh, it's awful." I'd be curious to hear where that request is. I'd love for you to bring it forward, because there are millions of dollars that every year unions raise for completely apolitical charities and organizations.

One that I like to think of now: I've never seen any members from the government caucus at this event, but every year the labour movement sponsors a Labour Day barbecue where thousands of homeless and low-income people come and they are given a meal. I guess that's gone, too. Actually, I don't guess; it is. It is absolutely banned by this legislation. Why does this government hate having unions feed hungry people? What do they have against hungry people? What do they have against unions feeding them? I don't know. I'm just telling you that this is what's in your legislation, folks. Read it. Read your legislation. That's what you're doing. Those are the things that they are doing.

[Mr. Amery in the chair]

Let's go further than that. I want to read a quote from a fellow – he's a lawyer and a writer – Colin Feasby. He's a managing partner at Osler who practises corporate law, securities law, energy law, and constitutional law. It's a name I just heard about as I was doing a bit of research and preparation for this, not, as far as I know, anyone who is at all associated with our party or unions, nor does he have them as clients. He says:

It [Bill 32] appears to be a paradigmatic example of the use of legislative power to silence or impair the efficacy of political opponents.

By that it's referring to the government's. Then he goes on:

Partisan political purposes may be inferred from the absence of any parallel legislative measures limiting the spending of corporate funds for political purposes.

Then finally he says:

Bill 32 is designed to limit the capacity of both NDP allies and . . . Here's a good one. . . . UCP critics to publicize political messages that the UCP . . . does not like.

Now, again, that's a corporate and securities lawyer publishing in a journal or on some platform with the University of Calgary law school. That's what you've brought in.

Now, this piece of legislation in terms of its profound attack on the freedom of speech of working people is absolutely going to be struck down by the courts. There's no question about that. It will be struck down. You know, anyways, I'm not going to read the multiple decisions that warn against anything that begins to look like this. This, of course, has moved beyond it considerably, but it will be struck down.

[The Speaker in the chair]

In the meantime this government, I'm assuming, is hoping they can get up to a whole bunch of fun times with their allies, diverting and funnelling money into political causes that they support while doing everything they can to hamstring and paralyze unions from asserting their many rights that they have had acknowledged by the Supreme Court of Canada under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I mean, I've never actually seen a government be so blatant in their imbalanced, partisan, self-serving use of this House for their own political purposes, but then again I've never seen a government fire somebody that was investigating them for breaking the law either. You know, every day is a new day here, and you're making history in ways that most of you shouldn't be very proud of.

Nonetheless, that's what this bill does, and eventually it will be found to be a breach of the Constitution and the Charter. What's troubling is why this government is so hostile to people's freedom of speech, because, of course, as we know this is certainly not – this is not – the first example of that. They are hostile to people's constitutional rights. We've got Bill 1. I can't remember how many court challenges are under way with respect to Bill 1, but it gives the government an absolutely overreaching, unnecessary, oppressive authority to limit people's ability to exercise their rights under the Charter. We have the bill that ripped up the doctors' contract. That's going to the courts. We have the bill where they interfered with the arbitral process that the legislation required them to follow with respect to certain public-sector unions.

I'm losing track of all the constitutional breaches that these folks – oh, we have Bill 24, the health act, and Bill 10. That one's interesting. Your friend and ally even has reached his limit in terms of how many attacks on people's fundamental, constitutional rights can be tolerated. I don't know. I think we're at about eight Charter challenges right now, and this bill is certainly going to trigger probably another eight if not more.

It raises the question: what is it about people's fundamental, constitutional, and Charter rights to free speech and free assembly and general ability to speak out about things they agree or disagree with about the government that they are so scared of? I mean, we're a democracy. We're not all going to agree, and sometimes we're going to disagree, and sometimes we're going to talk about it. Yet this government is embarking on an unprecedented run at shutting down the voices of opposition.

Meanwhile – and I almost forgot this, but thankfully I just remembered – they're also engaging in an unprecedented use of public dollars to pursue inappropriate political activities. On one hand, people who are just getting up in the morning, without getting paid anything by anybody, just pick up their sign, and they march out to go demonstrate to say: "Please save the planet. Please give

my child an educational assistant. Please don't privatize my health care." Those people the government is scared of, and they want to stop them from expressing themselves.

5:10

Meanwhile the war room, run by a failed UCP candidate: well, they have – is it \$120 million? – \$120 million to run around saying things and to run around stealing logos and challenging whether the *New York Times* is actually a legitimate news agency, and we're using Alberta dollars to do this. I mean, actually, the more I think about it, I'm almost – okay; this is serious. This is serious. I need to not chuckle at it, but sometimes it's like a really bad political drama or something. That's okay.

Then the latest thing we've seen from that embarrassment of an agency is the fact that they actually were using taxpayer dollars to do advertising to data mine, and then they're shipping that data mining product, which, to be clear, is a product, to their political third-party allies who are doing nothing but supporting them politically, so it's a gross abuse of public funds, and this is what we heard about just yesterday. You know, the sun doesn't – there's not a day without the war room waking up and coming up with a plan to do something hideous.

Of course, when we question why the war room was protected from FOIP and protected from oversight and accountability, we speculated that maybe there was some no-goodness going on, but now we're seeing that, yep, it appears there is some no-goodness going on. So it's okay to inappropriately use the office of government through legislative efforts to do things like fire the Election Commissioner. It's okay to use the office of government and the treasury to data mine for political allies.

But on the flip side, you know, that Raging Granny who gets up in the morning to sing, sometimes well, sometimes in a different way, about public health care: well, what we need to do with her is make sure we have the authority to tell her where she can and cannot demonstrate. [interjections] Heaven forbid that she engages with the union member. Well, then we're going to have to make darn sure that she's never allowed to have a union member support her in her exercising of her voice. So that's that.

Ms Hoffman: Can you explain who the Raging Grannies are?

Ms Notley: The Raging Grannies?

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. They seem to not understand. They're laughing about it.

Ms Notley: I guess I assume everyone knows what the Raging Grannies are. I mean, the Raging Grannies is a lovely group of women who are mostly retired who sing songs at protests. They've been around for 25 years, and there's a group of about 100 of them all over the province. They go to protests, and they call themselves the Raging Grannies. They're lovely, sweet human beings who go to protests. They have protested to support public health care. They have protested to support public education. They have protested to support many things as they have a right to. Whether you agree or disagree with every single cause that the Raging Grannies support, that, my friends, is not the issue. The issue is that they should have a right to do it. The issue is that this government is bringing in a regime of legislative barriers to inhibit their ability to do that. These are some of the things that they are doing.

Members opposite make the ridiculous argument that this is all about protecting the democratic rights of individual union members. Now, what we know is that the Labour Relations Code is already full of multiple mechanisms through which the democratic rights of union members are protected. Those multiple mechanisms

have been reviewed repeatedly by the Supreme Court of Canada and thousands of administrative and judicial bodies between us and the Supreme Court of Canada for 40 years. It is very clear that unions are sufficiently democratic to protect the rights of individual members. That argument has been made and remade and remade and remade and supported by the courts.

Nonetheless, this government claims that somehow what they're trying to do is protect the individual rights of members, but the lie of that claim . . . [interjections] I'm sorry. The misrepresentation of that claim by the government is revealed if you look at sections 37 and 52 of this bill. There what's happening is that – I'm sure the members opposite are fully aware of what I'm talking about with sections 37 and 52 – in sections 37 and 52 this government is doing something which is very unheard of, which is removing the ability of members to choose a different union in the middle of being represented by a union. What they are doing is that they are giving a union, typically an employer-dominated union, like, for instance, CLAC, the opportunity to cut a deal before an open period and thereby remove the rights of those members to organize to either decertify and/or to certify with a different union.

Now, it says to me that the most fundamental thing that a union does is that it protects the rights of its workers in the workplace, and the most critical democratic element of what unions do is embedded in decertification and certification. You cannot say the words "democracy" and "union" at the same time and not understand your obligation to protect certification and decertification. You know what? I partially learned that when the members opposite said that simply getting enough signed declarations from workers that they wanted to join a union was not enough; that you had to have those union members have the opportunity to vote. So even if you got 65 per cent of union members to sign a card saying, "Yes, I want to be in a union," that is not sufficiently democratic; you must have a vote. Yes, you sure must because that's democracy. That's what the members opposite said, but now we are bringing in provisions under this bill to allow certain unions with the agreement of the employer to block the ability of members to decertify or recertify with a different union.

When you see that, what it demonstrates very clearly is that the democratic rights of individual working people have nothing to do with the impetus behind this bill. As that fellow there, who I just quoted, Colin Feasby, says: this is all about shutting down the voice of people who do not agree with the UCP. That is why this bill should be rejected. In so doing, we allow this Assembly to be used inappropriately as a tool by the party in power to serve its own political interests in a way that, I think, the founders of our parliamentary system did not anticipate or, I would suggest, would approve of.

Now, above and beyond that, there are a number of other things within this bill that also are designed to attack unions. You know, it's ironic. Of course, the members opposite complain about red tape, but what they've done is that they've basically gone out, bought a whole bunch of red tape, filled it into a dump truck, and then backed it up and tipped it up and slid that red tape onto the heads of all the unions because there is nothing – there are so many pieces of this legislation that are literally about paralyzing the ability of unions to do their job. I don't just mean that in terms of their ability to speak freely on things where they might disagree with the government. I also mean in terms of them doing their fundamental job of protecting the human rights, the safety rights, the working rights, the quality-of-life rights of their members, which is their fundamental job and indeed something that has been repeatedly recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada as something that every working person has a right to.

You know, they've opened up multiple ways in which the employer can go to the board and interfere with the operation of the union, multiple ways in which the employer can go to the board and create uncertainty around the arbitration process, the grievance process, the bargaining process. They've created multiple opportunities for the union to literally have to spend union members' money, which is designed to protect them in the workplace, on following as yet written regulations about what the form of a financial statement will look like.

5:20

Let's just remember – and it was mentioned, again, by the lawyer that I quoted, but it is really worth noting – that none of this is happening to protect shareholders. Like, shareholders don't get a chance to decide whether they're thumbs up or thumbs down with the political positions taken by their CEOs. Nope. Not at all. Shareholders have far fewer democratic institutions within which they can track the expenditure of their assets by the corporation within which they have an interest. Unions have multiple democratic features. There is no union that would say no to anybody asking for financial reports. Most unions provide financial – I mean, for many unions a lot of the financial reporting doesn't really matter. They do it every year, they send it to their AGMs every year, and they send it to their members on request, yada, yada, yada. They do all the things.

But now this bill literally gives the government an opportunity after the union has sent out a financial report to 25,000 members by e-mail to say: no; by regulation, it has to go by snail mail. So they've got to go around and send out another 25,000 annual reports. Then two days later they can write another regulation and say: no; we want you to give just a little bit more information on this one piece. So they have to do it all over again. This is absolutely disconnected from the stated objective of this bill. What it is is harassment because there are no complaints from people about, you know, misappropriation of funds by unions. Where are we seeing that?

I mean, we've got misappropriation of funds in corporations each and every day, but we don't see that as an across-the-board thing that is happening with unions. Yet this bill here, you know, is treating unions writ large as though they're the AER and former CEO of the AER, who was appointed by the Conservatives, who then subsequently did misappropriate funds. There are so many ways in which they are going to undermine the right of just the union to operate from day to day. It's clearly designed to harass, and there's no rational connection between these provisions.

Now, another thing that it does, again, which is going to immediately attract the attention of the courts, is that it attacks the right of union members to picket. We already had, just to be clear, very clear laws around picketing in Alberta. We had laws that outlined that picketing had to take place where the work was taking place and that any kind of criminal activity or any activity that would amount to a civil tort was barred. So all the things have been dealt with. But now what's happened is that you've injected language that is going to effectively paralyze and limit to a large degree the ability of union members to picket.

Just to be clear, you know – I don't know. When was it, 25 years ago? Member for Calgary-McCall, how old is the – I can't even remember the decision. It's a constitutional law course that anybody who's been practising law, even as long as I have been or since I went to law school, anyway, in the late '80s, early '90s, learned about: the Supreme Court of Canada decisions around the right to picket. This legislation, I would argue, sets up a regime which effectively undermines the right and eliminates the right to picket and is one of the nine or 10 parts of the legislation that will

ultimately be found to breach the fundamental constitutional rights of working Albertans.

I'm just going to look at some of the other things. I know we're going to get into more detail on a clause-by-clause basis about the ways in which the government is attacking unions, but I think you get our point, and our point is this. Working people in Alberta have been found, decades and decades ago, to have a fundamental constitutional right to come together in order to advance rights in the workplace where they would otherwise be victims of a profound imbalance in power between themselves and their employers. That is the law. That is understood. That is a thing. That is what's real, and that is a thing that exists across this country.

This government is doing whatever it can to limit the rights of working people to access that benefit, that fundamental constitutionally protected right. They are doing everything they can to limit the access. They are also doing everything they can to limit the capacity of the union once they create the union, and then on top of it, they are doing everything they can to breach their collective right to free speech through the work of the union. They are also attacking other very worthwhile social causes, like, for instance, protecting our publicly funded health care as well as general charities by seeking to prevent unions from supporting those worthwhile causes. They are doing all of these things, ultimately, as a form of revenge and a form of punishment to show people who speak up against them who's boss. It is remarkably oppressive, antidemocratic legislation unlike anything, as I've said before, we have seen in the history of this province.

In addition – it doesn't stop there – it goes into the pocketbooks of regular working people, hundreds of thousands of them across this province. At a time when those people are the most vulnerable and they need their government to have their back the most, this government is attacking them with this bill.

To go back to what I started with, on this side of the House we seek equity and equality for all Albertans, not only in times of prosperity but also in difficult times. The members opposite are clearly seeking the principle and the value of inequality, both in prosperous times and difficult times. There are multiple examples of that pursuit of inequality deeply embedded in this very flawed legislation.

I would suggest that members opposite take the time to read the legislation, to learn what it does, to talk to working people in their ridings, to call up union members, to ask them what they think about overtime and termination pay and notice and the right to have somebody in the room with them if they are a victim of harassment in their workplace, the right to have a place to file a grievance if they don't get paid within 10 days or 30 days of 60 days of doing the work for which they are owed payment. Ask those people in your riding what they think about losing those rights, and ask them if they think that's what the government should be focusing on right now.

We are at a crossroads in this province. We are, without question, in the midst of one of the biggest economic crises we've potentially been in since the '30s, and it's a time for us to make a decision about how we go forward. Do we build an economy premised on exploitation, on a race to the bottom, where those with a lot get more and everybody else is pushed harder and harder under the heels of those with power, or do we try to build a modern, diversified economy where we respect the rights of all working people to earn a living, to put food on the table, to keep a roof over their heads, to plan for their kids' futures, and to think about having a good life? What is the vision of this province?

This bill reflects the opposite of what I just described, and it should be rejected. I think that Albertans as a whole believe that we are better when we all do better and that we have it in us to chart a

path forward where we all do better and that we have not fallen so far that we have to attack each other in order to secure the prosperity of a few of us left on the raft. It's bad, folks, but it's not that bad, so we don't need to embark upon that path. As a result of that, we certainly do not need to move any further with this bill. We should not vote it out of second reading. We should vote against it and think about how we support working people instead of attacking them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been pleased to offer our comments on behalf of the NDP caucus.

5:30

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the leader for offering her comments. I want to honour – there are some folks in the gallery again today to hear debate on Bill 32, and those are Heather Smith, who is the president of the United Nurses of Alberta, as well as Danielle Larivee, who is the first vice-president of the United Nurses. Thank you both for being here.

The leader came to this place by way of the United Nurses, so I was hoping that maybe she'd be able to offer some reflections on the work that labour relations officers do at UNA to fight for better working conditions for their members, obviously the men and women on the front lines who are today fighting COVID in our hospitals and other health care facilities but also nurses' working conditions or patients' living conditions or health care conditions or care conditions. I'm hoping that the member can maybe elaborate a little bit on her experience as it relates to that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition has three minutes and 50 seconds remaining.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to offer my greetings to Heather Smith and Danielle Larivee, who, as members know, was also at one point the Member for Lesser Slave Lake and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and – what am I forgetting?

Ms Hoffman: Children's Services.

Ms Notley: Children's Services: that was it. I thank her for her tremendous contribution to the people of Alberta in that role.

Also, of course, Heather Smith. You know, I was talking earlier about Friends of Medicare. Heather was a founding member of Friends of Medicare and was on the front lines in terms of fighting against Bill 11, which was, without question, an attack on publicly funded health care. It was, without question, an attempt by the former PC government to bring credit-card medicine, two-tiered medicine, rich-only or, you know, write-a-cheque medicine to Alberta. Thankfully, and thanks to her work, we still have a public health care system to defend. Now, because of Bill 30, which is another one – we are certainly in the midst of dramatically trying to defend it. Nonetheless, we still at this point have a public health care system to defend.

You know, I had the privilege of working for the nurses' union for several years, and let me say that what we know is that nurses and, through them, Albertans and citizens and people who ultimately need care in our health care system have benefited as a result of the United Nurses of Alberta and their nursing union.

Interesting bit of history. Probably people won't remember, but back in the day before nurses unionized, they used to go into the

hospitals and care for people in the midst of pandemics and things like that for what was referred to as pin money. They were women, and they were very much sort of, you know, pooh-poohed by what were primarily male doctors, but they were needed in order to care for people in the health care sectors. It was considered women's work, and it was considered not worthy of a wage that was equivalent to many others in many other workplaces. So they unionized, and slowly over time they bargained and they negotiated to a point now where nurses (a) are very well educated and well qualified and have tremendous levels of experience, and (b) they have good wages so that they can, as I said before, raise their families, put food on the table, pay their mortgages, plan for their retirement, have pensions, all those good things. That, of course, is always under attack one way or the other, but they've done that work.

In terms of the workplace, though, on a day-to-day basis they also defend their members from instances of harassment. They have things called professional responsibility committees, which were negotiated by the union to ensure that the standard of care offered to patients was at the highest, safest level possible. So they weren't only just advocating with the employer for their own rights. They were also, within their collective agreement, asserting the right to advocate for higher quality care for patients, whether it was a question of the number of people on staff, whether it was a question of the type of equipment, whether it was a question of the type of medical practice. All those things were things that nurses negotiated the right to discuss with the employer in order to preserve the rights and conditions of patients in our health care, and for that I thank them.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate on Bill 32? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take this opportunity to express my support for Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, which brings significant benefits to all workers and employers and will also support economic recovery, restore balance in the workplace, and get Albertans back to work. I would like to applaud the minister for consulting with Albertans to amend the employment laws and rules to further support and protect job creators and protect workers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend my appreciation to the 5,400 survey responders, 75 per cent of which were employees between the ages of 25 and 54 years old. They provided feedback through the online Alberta cut red tape website.

[Mr. Amery in the chair]

The government has committed to engage with the public and industry partners, and we have done that. The concerns that were brought out to be addressed by this bill, the issues that were taken into consideration are around Alberta's labour laws and vacation time, holiday pay, youth employment rules, and where and how employment standards should apply. Targeted discussions and written feedback from stakeholders on matters relating to the relationship between employers, employees, and unions were also taken into consideration by the minister and the Premier to further support Albertans.

Bill 32 will provide employees and job creators with a clear and transparent role, which will promote efficiency and productivity within the system. This bill will highlight and provide a clear picture about the rest periods and vacation time relating to job-protected leave. These changes to the current legislation will restore balance and economic stability, including updates to rules, and reduce red tape, that will encourage employers and employees to work together to reach agreement.

Employment standards changes will simplify the general holiday pay calculation and better align with payroll cycles. This bill provides a simpler rule for calculating general holiday pay that is better aligned with pay cycles. An employee's average daily wage will be calculated as their total wages averaged over the number of days they worked in the four weeks immediately before the general holiday or four weeks ending on the last day of the pay period occurring just before the general holiday.

Also, we have to make changes to the termination processes so as to lessen the burdens on the employers, allowing them more flexibility, and reduce employers' costs and time spent on payroll processes. According to the Canadian Payroll Association reducing red tape from daily operations will allow employers to align termination payments with their payroll cycles, which could save employers \$100 million annually, keeping more Albertans employed and businesses open. This bill includes provisions that will align with what stakeholders had to say as well as the temporary group termination provisions that were put in place under the Public Health Act MO 18.2020.

[The Speaker in the chair]

To help employers manage operations during COVID-19, when employers terminate 50 or more employees in the same location in a four-week period, they will still give the ministry four weeks' notice or as much notice as is reasonable in these circumstances. This notice gives the ministry time to organize support for the affected employees. Employees will get individual termination notices based on how long they have worked for their employer. Mr. Speaker, more flexible policies will encourage job creation by reducing burdens on employers.

5:40

On temporary layoffs employers will still have to provide employees notice of temporary layoff, and there is still a limit to how long a temporary layoff can last. The maximum length of time for a temporary layoff not due to COVID-19 will be 60 days in a 120-day period until August 15, when it will be 90 days within a 120-day period.

Other changes that Bill 32 includes are the removal of a specific requirement for a written temporary layoff notice and allowing employers to apply to extend the length of temporary layoffs in unique circumstances such as wildfire or pandemic. We recognize that reducing burdens on employers is a critical part of economic recovery as many businesses have been greatly impacted as a result of the public health crisis.

As to the labour relations provisions, changes will include nurse practitioners in the code so they can bargain collectively and be subject to the legislation. That means nurse practitioners can join or form unions and collectively negotiate.

Also, Bill 32 will require unions to provide their members with financial statements to strengthen employee rights by making sure they can access information on how their union spends their money. To protect any union members who do not want their dues to fund ideological issues or matters that do not align with their beliefs, Bill 32 will require consent or approval from the members to fund such causes before the dues they have paid can be utilized for that purpose. Employees will still pay union dues that fund core union business like collective bargaining or member representation, but they will no longer have to pay union dues for the portion that goes towards funding political activities and causes unless they opt in to do so. This is a needed protection to ensure union members are not forced to fund activities that would harm them.

Mr. Speaker, there is exciting change for younger Albertans that this bill carries. Bill 32 is proposing changes that will help youth

find work by expanding the types of jobs that 13- and 14-year-olds are allowed to do without first needing a permit. Jobs include light janitorial work in offices, coaching, tutoring. It also includes some jobs in the restaurant industry if the youth is working with someone older than 18. These changes encourage job creators to hire more young Albertans so that they can get important work experience to help them secure future employment and secure their futures. Also, it will reduce administrative burdens and red tape for job creators by removing the need for permits and will give youth critical job skills and experience that will equip them for the future.

Albertans aged 13 and 14 will still be needing their parents' consent to work, but employers will no longer have to get a permit to hire them for jobs that are commonly approved by permit. These changes will help employers save time and money and make it easier for them to reopen, and it will help protect the jobs of hard-working Albertans. During the challenging economic times that we are currently facing following COVID-19, this will help employers save time and money, making it easier for employers to reopen or stay open during this situation and time. Reducing red tape for employers will command the attention of job creators across Canada and the world to attract more businesses and investment to Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, new work opportunities will get Albertans back to work and support economic recovery today. Our commitment has campaigned on the promise to restore balance to Alberta's labour laws. Bill 32, the Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, will support economic recovery, restore balance in the workplace, and get Albertans back to work. These amendments that this bill provides will give employees more freedom to find new opportunities without having to fear the consequences from unions. As promised in the platform, we will always be committed to a way protect workers and restore balance and democracy.

Again, I would like to applaud the minister, all the stakeholders and Albertans that have taken the time to provide feedback to not only better the economy of Alberta but to respect and support the feedback of our workers and employers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment for the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to add some comments. Of course, I do want to also say hi and thanks to our guests up in the gallery. You know, Mr. Speaker, my daughter was born with a congenital heart disease, and thanks to the doctors that we have and especially the nurses that we have here in this province, I get to say that she's now a heart adult because of the work that they do, which is why this bill, for me, is incredibly, incredibly troubling.

I have to admit, following the Leader of the Official Opposition is going to be quite a task. Her knowledge in this area is quite extensive, and I think a lot of her remarks this afternoon were right on point with why Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, shouldn't be read a second time.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I look at this title, balance, I kind of think of it as being asked to balance while standing on the side of the north face of Mount Everest. That's how balanced this bill is. The other example I can think of is the balancing scale there. This bill actually just cuts off one side of it and says: "There. Now it's balanced." We are seeing some very fundamental shifts here in what this government seems to think is going to be labour peace in

this province. It is definitely a blatant attack on hard-working Albertans.

I've heard the rhetoric over and over again about the big union bosses and everything like that. Very clearly, Mr. Speaker, when I hear about this rhetoric, that just confirms to me that members opposite really, actually have no idea what a union is. I'd be surprised if they even know which side of a union card is up, if there were even arrows pointed on it, based on what I'm seeing being brought forward here today.

The Leader of the Official Opposition touched on some of this a little bit, around having union members decide how their money, union dues are to be spent. See, there is a duty on a union to represent their membership in all aspects of their daily operations. When we think about things like weekends, that was because of the hard work that unions did lobbying. The eight-hour work day, ending child labour – of course, that's another subject that hopefully I will have enough time to touch on here this afternoon – work breaks, including paid lunches, equal pay for equal work with women was based on the political activity of unions lobbying governments for change.

Abolition of sweatshops, sick leave, Canada pension plan – this government might even be thinking about this. Well, it was a union that got it to begin with. Universal health care, the minimum wage, pregnancy and parental leave, antidiscrimination rules at work, overtime pay, occupational health and safety, the 40-hour work week, workers' compensation, employment insurance, pensions, public education, collective bargaining rights, wrongful termination laws, whistle-blower protection laws, antisexual harassment laws, holiday pay: thank a union. These were brought in because of the political activities that they needed to do to bring these to you. I have a feeling that at some point in time in all of our careers before we came into this House, we benefited from one or more of those things on that list. The list is bigger; these are just a few of the things.

5:50

One of the troubling things that I'll start off with, Mr. Speaker – I've always gotten, you know, hung up on the language with what's being proposed. The Leader of the Opposition had brought this up, too. This is located right on page 24, under "Deduction election," section 26.1(1):

(iv) any activities prescribed by the regulations.

I think I equated this one time in another debate on a bill to creating such a hole that I could probably fly the space shuttle through it from the back seat. "Any activities prescribed": I've seen this coming up over and over again through legislation.

This is what I like to kind of call the Well, If I Want to do Something Section, for lack of better words here. I've always said that when you're creating legislation or sometimes collective bargaining agreements, language is everything. When you're creating language, it's not necessarily for the people that are in this room right now; it's going to be for the ones that are in this room when we're gone. Are they going to be able to interpret this?

I remember a little comment from the Minister of Labour and Immigration talking about: when it comes to these new proposed changes, well, you know, we figure a majority of employers will follow these without any problems. And I would agree with him; a majority will. I'm not worried about the majority. I'm worried about the one employer that's going to take advantage of this, which swings me back now to the whole thing on youth workers. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that you have kids. Mine are of course grown now. But at 13 and 14 years old the thing that you should be focusing on is your education, not getting a job and helping to support your family, which was the comment, I believe, that was

made by the minister in the press conference introducing this bill. I have a profound problem with that.

Now, back in my workplace, at Lucerne ice cream, I was responsible for the training of any individual that was going to need to use a power jack or a forklift. Mr. Speaker, I had a hard enough time teaching adults to work safely on these things. Could we get that one employer that puts a 13- or 14-year-old on a forklift? [interjection] Like I said, I'm not worried about the majority; I'm worried about the one. All it takes is one. People get killed on that piece of machinery. I've almost seen it with adults. And, yes, I get a little bit excited about this kind of thing because I take health and safety – thank a union, by the way, for these kinds of things.

The excuse of, you know, “We can have the parents help to look after this,” Mr. Speaker, frankly, is ridiculous. Parents have their own jobs to go to because those that are in precarious work positions and who are making lower wages are too busy trying to provide for their families. The red tape of a permit so we can keep track of youth – and I don't have a problem with youth going out to get some life experience that they can use later on; they need to do it safely – we are able to keep track of to make sure that that one employer follows the rules and doesn't put anybody at risk.

I'd like to talk a little bit here this afternoon about the changes around the hours. I've heard that, you know, we're not changing the 12 hours, we're not changing the 44 hours, right up until somebody exercises that little exemption part. That was another thing that caught my eye very, very quickly, Mr. Speaker, around the exemption, because as soon as you start applying for an exemption, that means you're saying: well, I actually, really don't want to follow that. And then you have people starting to work 14-, 16-hour shifts.

I've seen it in my own workplace. In fact, I remember a former superintendent came through the ice cream plant, and when he found out that there were people working over 12-hour shifts, well, fireworks started a little bit because he was looking out for, quite

frankly, the company for any possible safety issues. I mean, let's be honest, Mr. Speaker. We've seen people in this Chamber over 12 hours straight. You start to get tired. Thankfully, the only thing we're driving is a chair and a desk, but what about those people that are driving a forklift or a heavy-duty piece of equipment? Because of this change we may see people now put at risk, and that's unacceptable.

I also want to talk a little bit about extending the termination pay. You know, we've heard very, very clearly and from the speaker before me as well: this will give us an opportunity to save employers \$100 million. How many people do you expect to see terminated to save them \$100 million? Is that a hint of maybe things to come, maybe some of our amazing nurses like our guests up in the gallery? Are we expecting a bunch of nurses to maybe get laid off here in the next little while? Is that why we're putting this in, so that then we can delay paying them the money that they're so rightfully owed just because it didn't work out in the pay cycle?

I have to admit, Mr. Speaker, back when I was at Lucerne ice cream – you know, I had a 26-year career there – I saw some faces come; I saw some faces go. I was part of most of those meetings when people were terminated, but not once did I hear my employer say: gosh, I wish we could delay paying them so we could save a couple of dollars. Didn't happen. They paid them their money that was owed, and life went on. So I don't know if maybe, by chance, we're seeing a foreshadowing of maybe things to come here in the public sector. We've certainly seen some commitments around this, so how many people are we expecting to see get laid off here?

Around picketing, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(4) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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