



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, November 2, 2021

Day 122

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
Official Opposition Whip
Ellis, Hon. Mike, Calgary-West (UC)
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Frey (formerly Glasgo), Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hunter, Grant R., Taber-Warner (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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Government Whip
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Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UC),
Premier
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UC)
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (Ind)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)
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Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UC)

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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, QC, Calgary-Elbow (UC)
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, QC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
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Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, Calgary-North (UC)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche

Party standings:

United Conservative: 20

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 2

Vacant: 1

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Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and
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Whitney Issik	Associate Minister of Status of Women
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Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Muhammad Yaseen	Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism

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Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Rowswell
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

Allard
Eggen
Gray
Hunter
Phillips
Rehn
Singh

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Neudorf
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Barnes
Bilous
Frey (formerly Glasgo)
Irwin
Rosin
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Sweet
van Dijken
Walker

Select Special Child and Youth Advocate Search Committee

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Goehring
Lovely
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Sabir
Smith
Turton

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Lovely
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery
Carson
Frey (formerly Glasgo)
Gotfried
Hunter
Loewen
Pancholi
Reid
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Smith

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Ceci
Long
Loyola
Rosin
Shepherd
Smith
Sweet
van Dijken

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Allard
Dang
Deol
Goehring
Long
Neudorf
Sabir
Sigurdson, R.J.
Williams

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon

Amery
Dang
Frey (formerly Glasgo)
Irwin
Long
Nielsen
Rehn
Rosin
Sigurdson, L.

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith
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Armstrong-Homeniuk
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Renaud
Stephan
Williams

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Phillips
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Armstrong-Homeniuk
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Pancholi
Renaud
Rowswell
Schmidt
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Turton
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Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights

Chair: Mr. Sigurdson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rutherford

Frey (formerly Glasgo)
Ganley
Hanson
Milliken
Nielsen
Rowswell
Schmidt
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van Dijken
Yao

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Hanson
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach
Feehan
Ganley
Getson
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Singh
Turton
Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 2, 2021

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening, everyone. Please be seated.

Government Motions

Senate Nominees

103. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) recognize that pursuant to the Alberta Senate Election Act over 1.1 million Albertans participated in the October 18, 2021, election of nominees for the Senate of Canada,
- (b) congratulate the three candidates who received the greatest number of votes – Pam Davidson, Erika Barootes, and Mykhailo Martyniuk – and recognize these candidates as Alberta’s nominees for the Senate of Canada, and
- (c) call on the Prime Minister to respect the democratic decision of Albertans by recommending to Her Majesty the Queen that two of these nominees be summoned to the Senate of Canada to fill Alberta’s two vacant seats.

[Adjourned debate November 2: Mr. Rutherford]

The Deputy Speaker: Any hon. members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’d like to take a moment to congratulate our new Senators in waiting, Pam Davidson and Erika Barootes. These women have worked incredibly hard to get where they are, and they should be rightly recognized for their accomplishments. Pam and Erika have demonstrated that Alberta women are strong willed, determined, and that only the sky is the limit.

All those who ran for Senate positions in the last election, including seven women, should be proud as it is not easy to put your name forward in an election. The results of our recent Senate election will serve as an inspiration and powerful message for young girls across Canada: you can do it.

For over 150 years Senators have gathered, deliberated, and debated in the Red Chamber. They serve an important role by providing sober second thought to legislation that comes out of the House of Commons. It’s important that our representation in the Senate is just as strong as our representation in the House of Commons. Senate elections in Alberta are especially important as our province has a unique and distinct history and cultural identity, and those tasked with the important responsibilities of representing Alberta’s interests should be chosen by Albertans.

Our province has a rich history of engaging in direct democracy, from voting against nationalizing public utilities in 1948 to more recent examples like voting against ratifying the Charlottetown accord in 1992. However, we are often overlooked by the federal government as we can’t offer the same vote-rich regions that Toronto and Montreal can. But it’s imperative that we have an interprovincial lens and co-operation on the very important tasks that Senators take on.

It is more important than ever that we have strong Albertan voices in the Senate and not Senators the Prime Minister appoints out of political convenience. Albertans have sent a strong message,

a clear message that we believe Pam and Erika are the best people to represent our province. They will stand up for Alberta and make sure that Ottawa listens to our concerns.

Having our own Senators represent us is just one mechanism of our multipronged approach for getting a fair deal for Alberta as we move along in our province’s recovery. Like all Albertans, Erika and Pam have an important role in writing the next great chapter of Alberta’s story.

Erika is a passionate community volunteer, giving her time to a variety of important causes, including the Edmonton Down Syndrome Society, Rotary International, and Fort Edmonton Park. She also serves as a mentor to young professionals in a number of organizations. Today she works as a western Canadian vice-president for a national strategic communications and public affairs company. In this role Erika works with small businesses and some of Canada’s biggest companies and nonprofits, helping them with job creation and investment in western Canada.

Pam is a small-business owner, farmer, volunteer, and mother of four children in the Red Deer area. A born-and-raised Albertan, she’s been actively involved in her community for many years and has been a strong political advocate at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. She knows what issues truly matter to us and will be a great advocate for the province.

They are both trailblazers in their own right, and we should be proud. However, the final step in getting these two incredible Albertans to the Senate is for Prime Minister Trudeau to recommend the appointment of these Senators-in-waiting to the Governor General. Prime Minister, Albertans have spoken loud and clear in this election, and you need to listen to the democratic will of the people of Alberta. We’ve sent a clear mandate, and it is important that our voices are heard. This is not only a critical moment for Albertans but for young women all across Canada. What kind of message will it send if the accomplishments and hard work of these women are discarded in favour of political patronage?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join the debate on Government Motion 103? I see the hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to be rising this evening to speak to this motion. Over 1.1 million Albertans voted in the Senate elections on October 18, and Senate nominees have been selected. While I am sure we can all agree that we wish voter turnout was higher, this does not diminish the results. Those who chose not to engage in the democratic process tell the rest that it does not matter to them what the results are, which means we can take the results as being endorsed by those who chose not to participate.

Putting your name forward to run for any type of public office is hard. In today’s environment, regardless of what side of the political fence you are on, you open yourself up to increasingly nasty comments and harassment. I want to thank all of the Senate candidates that put their names forward to represent Alberta in the Senate and to congratulate our three successful nominees: Pam Davidson, Erika Barootes, and Mykhailo Martyniuk. Committing to serve in the Senate is not a small one at this present time, being sworn in until the age of 75. Even more impressive is the fact that all of these individuals recognized, in one way or another, that Senate elections are valuable to our democracy.

Senators do important work in checking and balancing government legislation at the federal level. The Senate is supposed to make sure that one part of the country is not devastated by any particular piece of legislation. Well, we can see that this isn’t happening now, which brings me to the faults in our current system

and why Senate elections are so important. While it is one thing to respect traditions, the practice of the Prime Minister recommending to Her Majesty the appointments they would like, it is counterproductive to the very nature of what the Senate is supposed to do. If Senators are expected to represent their province's interests and provide that check and balance in our system, then it is highly inappropriate for the Prime Minister to be the one to appoint them without any kind of indication from voters as to who they desire to represent them. Without an actual election that would determine nominees for the Senate, the Senate is opened up to the possibility of becoming just a rubber stamp for the government and its agenda at the time.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, it has at times become a game with Prime Ministers just before an election is called: appoint as many like-minded Senators as possible, and if you don't win, it disrupts your successor's plans; if you do win, it makes life easier when you're trying to pass legislation. Even the recent move to make many Senators independent does not change the fact that they were appointed because they were of like mind to the Prime Minister that sent them there. This really shouldn't be up to the Prime Minister at all, particularly when a Prime Minister such as our current one only got 32.6 per cent of the vote in an election. It is even more inappropriate that a Prime Minister that only got 15.5 per cent of the vote in Alberta should choose on his own whim who should represent our great province.

In a democracy, when a Senator is expected to serve the people of the province that they represent, it should be up to the voters to decide who that is. The recent Senate nominees put their names out there for an election knowing full well that even though Albertans might choose them as Senators-in-waiting, the Prime Minister might not bother to recognize the will of Albertans. It is disturbing that any Prime Minister would think of not appointing those Senators that Albertans have selected. That is essentially the Prime Minister telling the electorate of one of the provinces of the country he leads that he does not care about their opinion. I wish I could say that Albertans would be surprised that a Prime Minister would reject their democratic voice, but when it comes to our current Prime Minister and his father, well, there would be no surprise there, Madam Speaker.

Earlier this year we reintroduced the ability for Albertans to have their voice heard in Senate elections. It is no secret that Albertans have long pushed for an elected Senate as part of a triple-E Senate dream: equal, elected, and effective. The triple-E Senate push began here in western Canada with the Reform Party several decades ago, and Albertans have taken it to heart. By allowing Senate elections in Alberta, we put our words and desires into action and allowed for at least two of the three Es to become a reality, elected and effective. Truly, Madam Speaker, a Senator cannot actually be effective if they are not accountable to the electorate that they serve. Further, they cannot be truly accountable for their actions in the Senate if they are not elected. This is why we are pushing for Senate elections.

7:40

Of course, ideally, we would be holding regular Senate elections Canada-wide for all Senators every four years or so to keep them accountable. Unfortunately, that requires constitutional reform that isn't likely to happen any time soon for a variety of reasons. In Alberta electing Senators-in-waiting is something we can do in the meantime while the rules, as they presently exist and as we have them, hopefully will change. This spring we also urged the Prime Minister to wait until that election was over to appoint two of the successful candidates. Much to my surprise, Madam Speaker, he does not seem to have waited for that moment.

Now I join with other members in this House to encourage him to do the right thing. I hope that he will let Albertans know that while he does not respect our energy sector, he at least has respect for our democratic will. He should select and appoint from the Senators-in-waiting that Albertans have selected. As the House of Commons looks to resume its business shortly, I hope that he will not wait too much longer. Alberta at least deserves to have all of its Senate seats filled. These Senators-in-waiting are good people, Madam Speaker. They have Alberta's best interests at heart. I know two out of the three personally, and I am sure that they would make us proud. I look forward in optimism that the Prime Minister will do the right thing.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join the debate on Government Motion 103? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's kind of interesting, Motion 103. You know, some of my fellow colleagues have stood up here and said that we've reconstituted the electoral process when it comes to Senators. Some folks may look down their nose at it with disdain and say: well, it's not really binding. But part of the reasons are that we're hoping to make a little bit of an impact, to make a difference.

I'm going to go on a little bit of a tangent here when it comes to the whole democracy in our country. Passing a couple of workers in the hallway – and I'm not going to mention their names – we've gotten to know folks over the last couple of years here. There's, you know, the janitorial service, the folks that keep the lights on for us, the folks that keep us safe here at night, the ones that get to record what we're saying. We have that common courtesy passing each other because we tend to work the graveyard shift.

One of the individuals today had noticed that I'd been running a couple of shifts. I've been working day shift, night shift, and everything else. Typically that's what happens when you're the local guy. You try to cover off for other folks. We do that as a team. It's that camaraderie. The gentleman had asked, you know: "What are you doing? Where are you going?" I said, "Well, I can't get enough of that democracy, coming back and talking about it." He says, "Is there any left?"

This is what happens when we don't respect the electoral process. This is what happens when there's voter apathy. This is what happens when people are taking a lot of knocks on the chin. In western Canada we've taken our fair share of knocks on the chin, taken our fair share of knocks when it comes to our energy sector. We have a bunch of concerns that may get pooh-poohed down east by some folks that don't understand how much Alberta contributes to this country, how much we wish to continue to contribute to this country. But we want our own share. We want to be recognized. We want that fair shake.

When we passed that bill earlier in the year to put the Senate election back on the table, we knew it wasn't a slam dunk. We knew we'd have to have some debate in here. We knew that the Prime Minister doesn't have to recognize it. But our fellow Albertans do. There are only so many things that we can do at a provincial level to try to compel or wish along or to try to instill some more of that democracy. So to the individual that, you know, I saw in the hallway, thank you. Thank you for bringing to light that real, God's honest truth of why we are doing this.

I want to thank those individuals that put their names forward. I'm going to read the copy of Motion 103.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) recognize that pursuant to the Alberta Senate Election Act over 1.1 million Albertans participated in the October 18, 2021, election of nominees for the Senate of Canada.

The motion wishes to congratulate, for the greatest number of votes, Pam Davidson, Erika Barootes, and Mykhailo Martyniuk. Mykhailo, if I mess it up, I apologize. I've met you a few times, and being married to a Ukrainian lady, you'd think I'd get it right one day. I apologize in advance.

- (b) ... recognize these candidates as Alberta's nominees for the Senate of Canada, and
- (c) call on the Prime Minister to respect the democratic decision of Albertans by recommending to Her Majesty the Queen that two of these nominees be summoned to the Senate of Canada to fill [those] two vacant seats.

I'm going to read that one again. We call on the Prime Minister to respect the democratic decision of 1.1 million Albertans to recognize who we'd like to send to the Senate on our behalf to represent the interests and to not just be appointed, because that's how we feel here in Alberta and the west.

You want to talk about folks that are disenfranchised. I have never seen so many people talking about separation. It seems that every time we turn around, there's something else kicking us. We've got either an economic crisis or we've got to deal with weather, we've got to deal with droughts. We've been talking at length, you know, for the members opposite, internally about the droughts and the conditions.

I referred to this as God's country how many times? I love this province. I love this country. I was looking back at some of our records, and folks say, you know, on some of the Twitter posts and whatever else might be floating around out there: "Well, you're just all concentrating on your area. You don't really care about the country." Well, holy crow. Family genealogy: in 1751 the first Getsons came over and rolled over to Nova Scotia from East Friesland. So even before the country was formed – oh, yeah, my grandpappy, my Grandpa Getson, was from Prince Edward Island, the place where we had ...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I realize the name might be your own and not about you, but it's still not allowed in this Assembly because it is your name.

Mr. Getson: My apologies. Yeah. Thank you for the clarification, Madam Speaker.

My relatives that share the same name, that starts with a G: Prince Edward Island, where we signed the Constitution in 1867. Then they came out west. So the history here and the fabric – and I've had a chance to work right across the country. Once you start dealing with folks – and again that linear construction, those projects will do that for you. It really binds and it shows – and I've spoken a couple of times about these major projects. You know, we can't just pull it off by ourselves, and we can't just be independent. We're not an island. So the folks that want separation: well, I'd love to carve off the rest of the country, give us ocean access and do that. We can't. By the way, it's a pretty darn good country. We kind of want to be part of it, and we want to continue that process.

But the frustrations – I mean, the carbon tax kind of was the thing that started it. Then we had Bill C-48, and then we had Bill C-69, and then we had Teck and then Northern Gateway and Energy East and Trans Mountain. I mean, it just goes on and on and on.

So if there's anything – Prime Minister, I've never met you, but I'd like to so that we could have a frank coffee conversation and let you really know how we feel out here. I'm sure others have or tried to compel you to at least throw us a bone here. One point one million Albertans want their Senators. We want to have a fair shake. We want electoral reform, that you'd asked for and you'd said and

campaigned on the original campaign that you were going to give us. We'd really love to see that come to fruition. We'd like to have that voice that's there, that when the chips are down or when that interest comes in and we're lobbying, as the Energy minister has before, those Senators that we elect take that into consideration, that they consider the best not only just for the country but the best for our region as well, and to know that we're an integral part of it. The former Prime Minister had put a lot of hope into us for restoring that Senate and reforming it, and I'm sure hoping that happens one day.

Again to Pam, Erika, and Mykhailo: it was great to meet you over the last couple of years in different times and to hear your passion even before you were running as Senators, to tell us about your feel for the province and how you would represent us. I really hope that carries forward.

I'm hoping that the members opposite join us on this, too. I don't want to be on my soapbox and talking about our province so much. I know that we kind of get cross-threaded once in a while based on our political spectrum and ideas. But I honestly do feel that the folks wouldn't be here unless they had the province's best interest at heart. I think one of the best ways to demonstrate that would be to help us vote on this motion. Send out that message to your friends down east as well, that we would really, really, really, really, really, for Christmas, if anything, like to have a couple of Senators put down there for us.

With that, Madam Speaker, obviously, you can tell I'm pretty passionate about it. It's also getting pretty punchy in the low hours here of low sleep, and I want to make sure I don't get cross-threaded or out of line anymore by going on too long. But that's why this motion is important. And for the gentleman in the hallway again and the other folks here: democracy is still alive as long as we keep it alive and as long as we're genuine to our founding fathers and the principles of this country and the legislation that's in place. We can still keep that democratic process and represent the folks that take the time to go out there, put their name out, give up their time to do that, and for all the folks that show up and vote.

Prime Minister Trudeau, 2 out of 3 wouldn't be too bad.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to speak very briefly in favour of Motion 103, and I want to do that because one of the successful elected Senators, Pam Davidson, is a personal friend of mine. She is from central Alberta. She received the highest number of votes from Albertans in these Senate elections. I just want to share with the Legislature a little bit of information that speaks to the character of my friend Pam Davidson.

7:50

Pam Davidson is an active servant leader in the community. That would describe her very well. Like many strong women in our communities, she leads by example. She is one of the principal organizers of a tradition that we have in central Alberta called the mayors prayer breakfast. At that prayer breakfast mayors throughout central Alberta would come together with other communities, and prayers would be said that they would make good decisions that would serve the interest in their communities in the course of their service.

Madam Speaker, during these challenging times if there was ever a need for the assistance of providence for governments, that time is certainly now. Of course, with the election of the United Conservative Party government she was also one of the principal

organizers of the Premier's prayer breakfast that we had in Edmonton prior to COVID.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say that the Senate elections are not a waste of time. I think as Albertans it's really important that we do what is right, that we act in a principled way and let the consequences follow. It's important to give Albertans a voice in who they wish to represent them in the Senate in Canada.

Madam Speaker, I've been reading a newspaper article that frames our current Prime Minister as the first NDP Prime Minister. There is some validity to that assessment, but more concerning to me is that we have perhaps elected the first separatist Prime Minister. The current Prime Minister has created more division in our country than any other Prime Minister in the past by a very wide margin. In order to help have more peace and to have more unity, I hope to see the Prime Minister choose to do what is right, respect the voice of Albertans and appoint this principled woman as well as the other successful candidates to the Senate. I hope we do what is right here, and I am favouring this motion.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members that wish to join the debate on Government Motion 103?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 103 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:53 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Long	Singh
Dreeshen	Nally	Stephan
Fir	Neudorf	Toews
Frey	Nicolaides	Toor
Getson	Pon	Turton
Hanson	Rosin	van Dijken
Horner	Savage	Wilson
Hunter	Schow	Yao
Issik	Schulz	Yaseen

8:10

Against the motion:

Ceci	Gray	Loyola
Dach	Hoffman	Shepherd
Feehan		

Totals: For – 27 Against – 7

[Government Motion 103 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 76 Captive Insurance Companies Act

[Adjourned debate October 28: Mr. Toews]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there members wishing to join the debate on second reading of Bill 76? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill and to essentially pose a few

questions or thoughts to the minister because I have kind of yet to determine how I feel about voting for this bill or not, and I'm hoping that they can help me make up my mind a little bit. I understand the intent of this bill. I understand that, you know, it does reflect legislation that exists in other places in some ways, that captive insurance is a practice that is in existence in other jurisdictions and, in fact, is available to even Alberta companies if they wish to go abroad to get that kind of information. But I guess I just have some general thoughts about it. I'd like to support the bill, I think, in the end, so I just wanted to put forward some of the things that I am concerned about.

The problem with the bill, really, from my perspective is that so much of it is left unsaid and that it really is a bill that – as we always say, the devil will be in the details. In this case that's in regulations, and it leaves me with some concerns. I understand that the primary intent here is one of risk assessment and risk management, a very important thing for all of us, one I certainly think is an appropriate role for government to be concerned about, because the consequences of having a risk go the wrong way are very devastating for people, whether that be in business such as in this circumstance or in any variety of other community situations. We know the consequences of taking a chance and thinking, you know, "Oh, it's going to be okay," and it's not okay. Sometimes the consequence is very severe. We have seen that with COVID, that if you make the wrong choice, the consequence can be people's lives or livelihoods.

So that leaves me with some concerns a little bit about what is happening here in this bill, and I'm wondering a little bit about whether or not the minister can perhaps stand up in the House and fill in a few small pieces of the detail. My concerns are that companies will essentially be able to create a secondary company that will take on a substantial amount of risk on their behalf. So let's just look at – the idea that they do that seems to be a reasonable strategy. Spread it out: I mean, that's essentially what insurance does anyways around the world. Every insurance company is insured by other insurance companies – that's how we make sure it all works – and when there are catastrophic circumstances in one place, it's not all put on a single company. Therefore, we don't have a situation where a company, at the worst possible time, ends up by folding and not being able to pay out insurance, because they indeed have spread out their risk to other insurance companies. I'm happy to see that that's what's happening here.

But my concern is that this is moving outside of the market forces in some ways; that is, that normally what happens is that an insurance company would go to the insurance market and seek insurance based on the larger market's assessment of risk in a particular situation and would then, you know, get a fair price for some insurance and would be able to spread out their risk that way. But in this case they're not going to the market. They're not going out and saying: give me your assessment of what my plans are, and tell me what that is worth, and give me a fair price for mediating the risks that I need to take. Instead, what they're doing is they're saying, "I'm actually going to defy the wisdom of markets; I'm going to say that the market is wrong; the price that the free market wants to give me for insurance is too high, and as such I am going to create an entity that will give me my backup insurance in defiance of the wisdom of the larger market," which is a very interesting thing for, you know, a free enterprise government to want to do. [interjection] Yes.

Mr. Dach: Thank you for allowing the intervention. At this point I wanted you to expand on the one you landed on just now . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, as this is the second speech, interventions are not yet allowed, but the next one will certainly be all yours.

Mr. Dach: All right. Thank you.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. We're all getting used to this. Thank you. I appreciate the direction.

Anyway, I guess it worries me a little bit when that happens, because when that works well, when you create your own risk body by creating your own captive insurance company, you're essentially telling the market that they are wrong and that the wisdom of the market is wrong and that you, in fact, should have some insurance at a price that you can afford and not the price that the market would like to give it to you for, which, you know, is a bit of a concerning thing for me. That means that we're actually saying that the best minds in insurance out there tell you that you should not have insurance, and you're going to say to them: I want it anyways, so I'm going to create an entity to do that. Now, I'm giving you the worst example of it here, but it's in order to illustrate a point.

Now, if it works well and, you know, the captive insurance company is able to actually provide some risk management and help to divide out some of the risks that are involved and keep a company well and do well itself, great. I'm happy for this all to happen. I certainly think that we want to have that as an option in society.

My concern is that we end up with a situation that we've started to see here in this province with the issue of orphan wells; that is, we have very successful companies that have a liability, and one of the best ways to get rid of that liability is to sell it off to a different company. What we're seeing, not because there's malfeasance, per se – and I want to be really clear about that. I'm hoping that nobody's actually doing this to purposely cheat, but what happens is that large, successful companies in the oil and gas industry give the well liabilities to these smaller, less-endowed companies, and when they fail, those smaller companies, it ends up back on the public purse because we have all of these orphan wells. It's supposed to be taken care of by our orphan well society and so on in this province, but we know that government – in fact, both governments, the last two governments, have actually had to step in and help those in these circumstances with orphan wells. What's happening is that there's a transfer of risk from large, successful corporations to the people of the province of Alberta.

Now, I don't think that happens all the time. I don't think that that's sort of the definition of experience, but it does happen on occasion, enough that we've actually seen it to be a problem. We've actually seen people in the province of Alberta actually have to put money out in order to accommodate the transfer of liability away from people who should have taken responsibility for it to the general public in this province.

I'm concerned about the possibility of that happening in this situation. A company creates a captive insurance agency, transfers the worst of their risk, the most edgy, the most dangerous risk, that they have on their portfolio into the captive insurance company, and then if that captive insurance company ends up having to do a big payout and it fails, simply fold the company up, declare bankruptcy, and it's all over. They don't pay out what they don't have, and the originator company has passed on all the risk to whom? The answer again is going to be the people of the province of Alberta. In the end that's who it is that's going to have to fork out the money to make up for it when a captive company goes bad.

8:20

You know, I'm hoping that that's not something that happens too often, but because we can't see all the regulations, we don't know what kind of measures are being put in place to ensure that (a) that doesn't happen or (b) if it does happen, there are ways that we can protect the citizens of the province of Alberta from this behaviour on the part of large, successful companies that are passing on public risk to private cost. That's my primary concern.

What highlights that concern for me is the fact that under this bill, it appears that the captive insurance companies are actually allowed to take on a greater degree of risk; that is, to create circumstances under which the amount of liability that they have is in excess of the typical liability that is allowed for normal insurance companies. Perhaps the minister can help me understand that. Indeed, is that true? Can these captive companies take on a greater degree or a different range of risks than are available to regular insurance companies?

If so, why would you do that? Why would you set up a circumstance where you have a company that is outside of the norms of what we've determined to be appropriate risk management through hundreds of years of practice of insurance? If you're doing that, it increases my concern that they're being used as an opportunity to transfer risk into a place where the originating company will not be responsible, and the ultimate demise of the captive insurance company will be on somebody else's plate, typically the plate of Albertans. That's the concern for me.

Now, I certainly would be attentive to the minister standing up and helping to walk me through some of that. I mean, I do appreciate that there are reasons why we do need to create these circumstances. I understand the nature of a hard market. But as I said, a hard market is the market telling you that they're not prepared to manage your risk for the price you want them to manage you for. There is a wisdom that you are betraying when you do that. Otherwise, the market would insure you. You wouldn't need to do this. The market would come forward.

Now, I understand in Alberta there's a special circumstance that's causing some problems with this here, and that is that oil and gas companies seem to be having some increasing difficulty with regard to ESG, or the environmental, social, and corporate governance movement, in terms of corporate – jeez, I can't get my language tonight. I don't know why. But the ESG movement is actually making it harder for companies to take the insurance, and that's part of the reason why we'd be doing this, so that we could create companies that do not feel the pressure of the ESG movement, which is of a deep concern for me.

I mean, I've long been someone who believes that companies are amoral entities; that is, they're not either good or bad. They just simply do what they do. Some of them do it well, and some of them do it poorly. But people are not amoral. People are moral by their very nature. It's okay to have companies that just simply want to increase profit in the world as long as we also increase the complexity of how we handle those companies in this world by allowing the influence of people to say that some things, even though they make profit, are not okay. There are things that we shouldn't be doing. We want the world to go in a particular direction because some things are just not good.

You know, I certainly could have made a lot of money in high school selling drugs in my high school, but I absolutely chose not to do that and not because there wasn't profit to be made. There certainly was. But I chose not to do it because of a moral stance I have around the use of those kinds of products in high school. That's the nature of ESG, that we're saying to corporations: "Yes. Please do what corporations do well. Create a business. Create

profit from that. Help pay out your shareholders and create products that we all use in this society. But please don't do so in such a way that it causes harm in other ways, maybe perhaps in unintentional ways but in ways that were not originally intended, those externalities, as they're often referred to."

If you were actually creating a bill to allow people to create an entity that allows them to not feel the pressure of ESG, then what you're saying is that we are trying to avoid the citizens' directive to govern in a moral way, in a way beyond the simple question of profit. If you do that, then you might be opening the door to things that are very undesirable, to business practices that are not okay in the modern sense of that, business practices that reflect that, you know, avarice of hundreds of years ago, when anything you did to make money was all right. It didn't matter if it damaged the environment. It didn't matter if it enslaved people. It didn't matter to anything else. We have absolutely, certainly spent the last few hundred years saying that all of those things are not okay and constructing a new kind of business in our world.

This is a slight shift backwards. This is a shift away from saying that the desires of people to live in a certain kind of society can be subverted, so that's what concerns me here. If the oil and gas companies are having trouble getting insurance because of ESG pressures, there's a really important message there. That important message is that the most free-enterprise market in the world, the insurance market, is telling you that you can't just do whatever you want. I mean, this is not radical lefties that are doing this. This is the major insurers and financiers in the world who are adopting ESG and telling oil and gas that if you do X, Y, and Z, we do not want to insure you. That's an incredibly important message, and it's not from the enemy. It's from the people who you've been working with for the last 30 or 40 or 50 or 100 years, from people who like what you do, who want to see you grow and be successful. They're still telling you that we cannot allow businesses to only govern themselves on the basis of profit.

Now, certainly, internally that can be their goal. That's the right thing for a business to do, to try to increase profits, but because we are human beings with a moral stance on the universe, we need to be able to layer complexity upon that. The complexity that we layer is that some things are not okay. You can't go into the Amazon jungle and destroy villages so that you can, you know, harvest trees and dig for gold on their ancestral lands. You just can't do that anymore. We did that for many, many generations, but we've decided as a society that that just really isn't okay anymore. You can't go into a community and rip up the ground and destroy all the water with selenium and make it impossible for people to feed their cattle and to water their crops because whatever it is that you did has destroyed the land. We say those things now because people are intrinsically moral, and they wish other people to live good lives.

As a result, the process that we have developed to express that is the ESG movement. I guess that's where I'm worried about this here. It's not that I think this is going to happen every day. I don't think this is a, you know, big, wide open door. What I'm worried about is that because we cannot see the regulations, there's no way for me to ask you specific enough questions about: how do we ensure that while we try to do the right thing, we do not allow terrible externalities or terrible unintended consequences to occur? That's my concern here.

I certainly would like to be able to support this. I understand the nature of risk management. I mean, I fundamentally believe in it from a very different angle than most businesspeople, but, you know, my whole support of things like public education and public health care really are: let's all pool our resources to manage the risks of poor health. Let's manage the risks of poor education. Let's manage the risks of societies that don't have the wherewithal to take

care of people in a good way. The more we reduce poverty, the more we reduce ill health. The more we reduce poor education, the more we will all be uplifted. I understand risk management. I understand the nature of us all pooling together to get a good outcome, so this is good.

8:30

I think I've laid out my concern. My concern is that you are allowing these companies to have a new breadth of risk that isn't true in the regular market, and you're establishing these companies in such a way that in the worst possible situation a successful company will off-load its liabilities, allow a subsidiary or a captive insurance company to take the hit, take the loss, and fail. The ultimate cost will come back to society and not be borne by the company that initiated it, and we'll be in the same position that we're in right now with oil and gas, where we're saying: "We have a huge liability. Are we going to be able to handle it? Are we going to be able to deal with this in some way?" We already know that the last two governments have already decided that oil and gas companies are not handling it and that they need some assistance in handling it. We know the federal government has contributed to that as well.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, just a reminder that interventions are now available, and the hon. Minister of Finance is not eligible to speak as he moved the initial second reading. Are there any other members that would like to join the debate? We'll go with the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a privilege and pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 76, the Captive Insurance Companies Act. Through Bill 76 the government of Alberta is working to allow captive insurance companies to set up shop in Alberta. This option for insurance already exists in the province of British Columbia, but this will be the first time such an option will be available in Alberta.

A captive insurance company is an insurance provider that is owned by the company it's insuring. It is an in-house insurance solution usually sought when traditional insurance is actually unable to provide necessary coverage. Many large investors, especially Alberta's energy companies, already have the funds they need to cover potential liabilities, but in many cases these companies are still required by law to have insurance. The Captive Insurance Companies Act, Bill 76, will allow these companies to use those funds to create their own insurance provider. This is an important step to help attract insurance capacity to the province, to enhance insurance options, and ultimately expand availability and lower prices.

The government is taking this bold step because right now there is a limited supply of insurance providers. This limited supply drives up the price and can make insurance even harder to come by. The lack of insurance options has a negative impact on Alberta's economy as companies that want to invest in Alberta may be forced to look elsewhere if they cannot get the insurance they need. Allowing captive insurance companies will provide a viable insurance alternative for the Alberta economy and for those looking to invest in it. It is also important because, in addition to dealing with the declining insurance capacity, many energy companies, for example, are finding it harder to find willing providers as so many are under significant pressure from antienergy campaigns and foreign activists to boycott investments in oil and gas development in Alberta's world-class energy sector.

Bill 76 will provide more options for these companies, which often already have the funds they need to cover their liabilities. This

is in keeping with the government's goal of removing red tape, boosting the Alberta economy, creating more jobs for Albertans, and creating more flexibility. Insurance options are one of the ways this government is making Alberta the best place to do business.

As I mentioned before, Alberta is only the second province in Canada to allow captive insurance companies, but globally there are about 70 jurisdictions that have some sort of captive insurer legislation. Bill 76 was developed by the Alberta government using the best practices from British Columbia, Bermuda, Barbados, and other jurisdictions that have been successful in allowing captive insurance.

Under the proposed legislation Alberta-licensed captive insurance will be allowed to insure the risks of a single entity. Alberta-licensed captive insurance will be also allowed to insure members of an association; for example, an industry group with complex insurance needs.

Bill 76 also includes requirements to ensure that captive insurance companies are conducting business according to sound financial and corporate governance principles. The bill will make provisions for regulations that will be tailored to this effort, and the minister expects to have these produced in the spring of 2022.

To keep this bill in line with the government's objective of creating jobs and making Alberta a great place to invest, the bill will require any captive insurance providers to be physically located in Alberta. Requiring captive insurance providers to be located in Alberta will help diversify Alberta's economy and stimulate job creation in the finance and insurance sectors. It is true that there are already Alberta businesses that utilize captive insurance providers to meet their needs, but until now, when they have wanted to utilize captive insurance, they have had to establish their providers outside of Alberta. The status quo makes no sense. Companies should be able to access the service they need right here in Alberta, and it's time to bring this business activity home and allow captive insurance.

The government's goal is to help Alberta businesses insure their risk. That is why Bill 76 takes the necessary steps to allow more insurance options in the province to help businesses deal with current pricing and availability pressures.

I want to thank the minister for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for acknowledging me and giving me this opportunity to speak to Bill 76. I have to say that I applaud the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, who did a fantastic job of outlining some very real concerns regarding this bill, and I share many of them.

Madam Speaker, I just want to let you know that when I was younger than I am now, not that I'm old, I learned from an elder in my community. I remember her telling me that there's a big difference between asking – and I'll translate as soon as I say the word in Spanish – ¿por qué?, why?, and ¿para qué?, what for? There's a big difference between these. As I started reading through this particular bill – and, you know, I was even in the back with some of my colleagues, and I was asking them the why question. Well, I get the why. The really concerning part is: for what? What are the implications that that has on what can potentially happen if this bill is passed?

I just wanted to reiterate, you know, as was well stated by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, that the fact is that collective insurance companies are saying: "We are not prepared to take this risk. We don't want to take this risk." There are two parts to that.

8:40

I mean, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford focused on the energy industry, but there are also the catastrophic losses. As we saw this past summer with the hailstorm in northeast Calgary, we're seeing more and more catastrophic events happen, whether they be natural or man-made, -influenced, and the reason for that is that it's connected to climate change. I'm sorry. I can't remember the exact riding of the member from Calgary who just spoke. The big, bad bogeymen for the UCP are, you know, environmental activists and Indigenous nations that have these foreign campaigns that are somehow trying to influence the process.

You know, I've spoken about it in this House before, the fact that Milton Friedman and his buddies over at the Chicago school were really big on just writing off externalities. They were like: these are things that don't really have an economic cost as we see them in the market. Granted, they're not in the market; that's why they're called externalities. That's why these economists decided to call it an externality, outside of the market. But these costs are very real. They're very real, and they impact not only the generation that is living that moment, but as we've seen with the process of colonization, the continued process of imperialism as it has occurred throughout the world, it continues to have a cost: a human cost, a social cost, an environmental cost.

Now to my brothers and sisters in the global south, and specifically I'm thinking about in Bolivia. They went so far – now, I understand that this may be completely foreign to some of the people in this room. This may be absolutely foreign to the people in this room, that they chose in the country's constitution – and it's not only Bolivia, by the way. You know, Ecuador has also done this. They chose to recognize the rights of Mother Earth.

Now, of course, these are countries that have a bigger population, a greater population of Indigenous peoples within them, and the state of Bolivia is even known as a plurinationalist state. Wrap your head around that for a second. Maybe you need a minute or an hour. It's a plurinationalist state. Why? Because Indigenous nations are actually recognized. Their rights are recognized. Their cosmology, their understanding of the world, is recognized within the constitution of that country. Now, you want to talk about truth and reconciliation, Madam Speaker? Let's go there. That's what I'm saying: let's go there.

I'm not saying that because I'm trying to be radical. I'm saying it because Indigenous peoples have had to suffer the economic downfall and the externalities of this system that we currently live in in the most aggressive and abhorrent way, more than any other people on this planet. Indigenous people have had to trade in their lives, their culture because their cosmology, their understanding of the world, did not fit the economic system that the powers that be wanted to enforce and prescribe upon humanity at that time. Think about that. So when I get up in this House, Madam Speaker, and I'm speaking to the issue of captive insurance companies, and you're telling me that the Indigenous peoples, Indigenous nations, environmental activists are the big, bad bogeyman of this bill and that insurance companies do not want to take on the risk based on this, this is a fallacy. The insurance companies are smart enough to know that the risk is too immense. As was boldly stated by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, it's a risk that this market doesn't want to fill.

Now, I'm not necessarily saying that captive insurance companies are bad things in themselves. I'm not necessarily saying that, but what I am saying is that there's a lot of room for error in the way that this bill has been brought forward in this House. Specifically, I'd like to focus on the fact that everything is just supposed to happen in the regulations. Everything is just supposed

to happen in the regulations according to this minister who has brought this piece of proposed legislation into this House. So, essentially, here we are once again inside the Legislature with the United Conservative Party saying: just trust us.

Now, Madam Speaker, given the current context that we're in, in the current economic reality that we're in, in the global pandemic that we're in and how this government has chosen to govern at this particular time, you're telling me to just trust them? Albertans do not want to trust them, and that's what Albertans are saying. The members over there are just laughing it up. They're laughing it up because, you know, Albertans don't trust them based on how they've chosen to govern through this pandemic. You know, I wouldn't be laughing if I were them because – I'll be quite honest – their actions lately have been quite shameful. Indeed, they have been quite shameful.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, there seem to be a lot of other conversations happening in here, which is great. I think that those conversations could happen outside of here.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, we are on Bill 76.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, just a reminder that we are on Bill 76. There has been quite a bit of latitude given to you throughout this speech. There are many times in which some of the words that are being used are inciting all sorts of disorder in this House, and I just ask that you focus on the matter at hand. I know you're a skilled debater, and I look forward to the remaining portion of your speech on Bill 76.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Indeed, when it comes to captive insurance companies and the fact that this minister would like to actually bring this forward when insurance companies themselves are not willing to take on the risk within this market, we've got to ask ourselves the question: why? Right? Why? I get it. I get it, you know. The reasons that the Member for – I'm sorry; I can't remember. Is it Calgary-North West?

Mrs. Frey: East.

Member Loyola: Calgary-East. The Member for Calgary-East and the reasons why he was saying that insurance companies feel pressured not to take on this risk were, for me, just as far away from reality as could possibly be.

8:50

But you know what? We're living in a very different time, and I really wish that the members on the opposite side would really stop to contemplate that. Okay; let's take it for a second that the insurance companies, yes, are being strong-armed by environmental activist groups into not insuring for these particular reasons. Let's imagine that this is true. Reality is . . . [interjection] Oh, please go ahead.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for a slight intervention. I wanted to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie if he indeed estimated that – the reasoning to answer the question of why we're at the point where around the world we see an increase in the number of jurisdictions which do have captive insurance available to them although there's not a lot of them; it's about 6,700 globally right now, and since the early 1960s that's been growing. But does he feel that this growth in offering, enabling different jurisdictions to create captive insurance is as a result of a market failure, is the result of the insurance market not being able to provide the risk insurance that companies need right now? What questions behind

that would he be asking if indeed he does believe it's actually a market failure?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, just a reminder on interventions to still speak through the chair, and just be aware that the microphone on your desk can only pick you up if you're speaking forward.

Please proceed.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. How much time do I have left if you don't mind?

The Deputy Speaker: You have three minutes.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you.

To answer the question that was brought by the Member for Edmonton-McClung in his interjection and why it is, I was saying: okay; let's assume that the big, bad bogeyman that the Member for Calgary-East was giving the reason for, let's imagine that this is true. I don't necessarily think that it's activists themselves. I think that Albertans – and not every Albertan. I'm not going to say that it's every Albertan, but the majority of Albertans, the majority of Canadians, the majority of people around the world understand the challenges with climate change. And as those relate in terms of just across the board, natural and man-made disasters, they understand the impacts that that is having on the insurance industry.

Now, as that particular subject relates to the energy industry and the problems, the challenges that have been created by past practice in the energy industry, Albertans understand this. Insurance companies understand this. Albertans understand that there are real environmental and social costs to the decisions that are made by industry. That's what we're all trying to wrap our heads around in here. So, as I said, Madam Speaker, I don't necessarily believe that captive insurance companies are a bad thing.

What I'm more concerned about is how this is going to play out in regulations. Even when you look at section 12 of the proposed piece of legislation, Bill 76, it says here:

12(1) Subject to subsection (2), no captive insurance company shall be subject to any restrictions on its investments, provided that the Minister may

- (a) prohibit or limit any investment by a company, or
- (b) direct a company to divest itself of all or part of any investment

that, in the Minister's opinion, imperils the capital adequacy or liquidity of the company.

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

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And now time for something completely different on the other side of the looking glass. I had a history lesson here that was something that Alice in Wonderland would have been tripping down a rabbit hole. I'm really thankful for the different perspectives on reality and the insurance market and what's taking place in Alberta, the energy sector. I really appreciate that, but I would like to talk about . . . [interjection] Oh, I see the minister is intervening, and I will give way.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the members' interest in captive insurance and Bill 76. I've found the discussion so far interesting around Bill 76 and the initiative to enable captive insurance in the province of Alberta. I won't be able to address all of the questions in this minute. I believe I have one minute – I'm seeing a nod – in this intervention. But I would like to start answering some of those.

Madam Speaker, we do have a hard insurance market certainly in the province. We have one within the nation, and in fact, really, I've understood that across the globe there is a hard insurance market. Often the result of a hard insurance market is that there is limited insurance supply relative to demand. There can be a number of reasons for a hard insurance market, but we have one today that results in, very often, premiums being priced right out of the market.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Minister, for talking about the hard insurance market and how premiums are being priced out of the market. Again, there is a recessing pool. It keeps getting closer and closer. When the members opposite are talking about ESG, environmental, social, and governance, we also like to talk about economical environmental social governance. When you're trying to project these projects or paint in a good light all the great things that we do – we've talked about the hydrogen file earlier today and how we're leading on that. We're talking about lower greenhouse gas emissions. We're talking about all the great things, and oftentimes Alberta energy is painted with a bad brush, that bad brush being from 30 to 40 years ago, not current technologies, not the TIER program that's in place.

When the member opposite is talking about the NGOs that, yes, everybody in the industry knew and every Albertan suspected for years were being well funded, lobbyists nonstop going to the insurance companies, going to the banks, painting us with an absolutely atrocious brush, this is yet another thing that we can't get the work done because we're having someone else tear the opportunities from our kids and our grandkids away.

When we're talking about environmental damage, there are two items on the entire planet here that provide us – and let's talk about the biggest forest in the world, the boreal forest, and we're talking about the Amazon, which are the two biggest lungs on the planet. We happen to be sitting in the middle of the boreal forest. When our industry is flat out absolutely two hundred per cent times what it is now, we're still at a carbon sink. But we can't get that message across the stage because, again, folks like my very spirited friend from the opposite aisle paint an absolutely wrong narrative. He would have you believe – and part of the reason why we can't get the insurance and part of the reason why we need to have a captive market is to put the finger back in the dam to stop it from busting on us because, literally, you're drying up the pond. You went after the environmental narrative, you went after the banks, and now you're going after the insurance markets. To what end? [interjection] Yes, Minister, I will definitely allow you to intervene.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I absolutely appreciate hearing the passion from the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland when it comes to his passion for this province and the people of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I did want to say that when you experience a hard insurance market, it does result in very high-cost premiums and very often a limited product offering, to where customers or prospective customers of insurance products can't find the products, in fact, that they need.

Madam Speaker, I've heard with interest the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford ask some, I think, very sincere questions around concern about risk. I do want to state this: the superintendent will provide oversight. The superintendent of insurance in this province will provide regulatory oversight over captive insurance companies. There will be capitalization requirements.

Mr. Getson: I appreciate the minister for carrying on that thought. Absolutely, to his point, there would be legislation put in place. There would be a superintendent who will oversee the risks,

Alberta's growth in creating insurance options for businesses, and support the jobs and the economic growth. Again, the well is drying up, and it's also pricing us out of the market. Wouldn't that be a shame if places like Venezuela were the ones supplying the world's energy? They have a fantastic human rights record. Great environmental activism down there. I worked with a lot of folks that got out of Venezuela when it changed from prior ideology to where it is now, and all we got to see is our future if we want to start looking at pushing that narrative too far for scoring points on Twitter rather than thinking about our grandkids' future.

9:00

Captive insurance helps business underserved in the current insurance market; in particular, those undertaking large-scale projects. Yeah, we need a few of those, and we also have garnered interest. We're talking about the ethanol plant up in the Alberta heartland. We've got Dow coming up here, a massive facility. Based on our environmental record, based on our insurance, hopefully, we can have these types of things in place giving Albertans jobs, getting our energy to market, doing the right things for the economy and for the environment: economic, environmental, social, governance. We have to tack the other "e" in there. Double "e" is better than one. Now let's start singing from the same song sheet, I would ask the members opposite.

If passed, Alberta would be the second province in Canada to allow captives. Again, British Columbia has done it, arguably pretty successfully. We have to look at innovations out here, out west. We're not going to get anything for free down east. We always have to look at something a little bit new and innovative here. If passed, Alberta would be the second one. We talked about that.

The proposed legislation lays the groundwork for any to establish their own in-house insurance company, again, if there's enough pooling, if there's enough capital there. You can look at the transportation companies. CN, CP: they do this. A lot of the big players will have, you know, a margin. If there's a call or something that takes place, they'll cover off that larger call because they can. They can afford it.

I've even had constituents coming forward in different industries. Aviation. Lloyd's of London seems to control the market there, and they're saying: "Hey, if we can apply this captive market model, maybe we can do things with aviation insurance. Maybe we can start self-insuring a bunch of these other items. Maybe we can pool in. Maybe it's the ag side." It gives us flexibility and options. It's not the big bogeyman. It's not.

Our goal in Alberta is to help businesses insure the risks. This is why we're taking the steps to allow more insurance options in the province to help deal with the current pricing and available pressures. We saw it on the automotive side as well. We have to change this.

Here are some of the innovative items that the minister and his department have been working on. They consulted with the insurance industries. They are spit-balling and coming up with clean-sheet ideas of ways we can do it, looking to other jurisdictions who have successfully done this. Globally there are 70 other jurisdictions that do this, as the member opposite had also mentioned, since the '60s. I don't have the information to corroborate that, but I'll take his word for it. If something has been around since the '60s, he would know. That's good.

Alberta's proposed legislation was developed using best practices from B.C., Vermont, Delaware, Bermuda, Barbados, and other successful global captive domiciles.

If the minister was wanting to take the last opportunity to intercede and clarify anything else or spark another idea from me, I would be more than happy to. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I did want to follow up on my thought. I find these minutes just not long enough. I do want to say that this captive insurance will be regulated by the superintendent of insurance. There will be capitalization requirements, liquidity requirements. Albertans can rest assured that they will not have to, ultimately, backstop the assets of any parent company that chooses to set up a captive. What we heard: again, concerns from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford that the captive insurance company may end up downloading liabilities onto Albertans. I want to say this, that a captive insurance company will not possess the assets or liabilities of the parent. Those will belong to the parent, and the captive insurance company will simply provide insurance to its parent, so there will not be any additional liability with the member's concerns. Ultimately, enabling captive insurance . . . [Mr. Toews' speaking time expired]

Mr. Getson: Madam Speaker, with closing thoughts, again I thank the minister for interceding and sparking those conversations and, again, his passion for Alberta, much to my own and members on this aisle, that want to tell the true story. We want to tell a great picture, a great thing that can happen in this province if we just allow it, if we stop tearing at each other, taking our little virtue signalling points, and jumping up and down for the Twitter feed and getting the Facebook likes or whatever else the motivation is. A lot of us on this side of the aisle are looking to the future, and it's bright.

We're talking about diversification. We're talking about supplying the world's needs for energy. Russia did not stutter. Russia in 2009 carried forward with their Yamal project. In 2017 they had it up and running, and they're supplying most of Europe's gas now. They're looking at icebreakers, 17 of them, running back and forth because of climate change, the Arctic conditions. It's the first time in 10,000 years that it's not going to be 40-year ice, Madam Speaker, that it's actually navigable.

We're going to see the fish stocks follow that. There are going to be a lot of other things following that climate change, absolutely. It's not the bogeyman. There are things that we can do, impactful things that we can use in technology; as an example, the TIER program. We have to look at innovative ways to make sure that we're there for the future for the world to do it in places other than, you know, like, Venezuela. Let's do it the best that we can in this province to help pull this country together.

Minister, I fully support Bill 76 to allow this new, innovative way to help ensure that we stay price competitive and to make sure that our industries are still there and that those good Albertans who have the innovative ideas can still keep rolling forward. I strongly request – hopefully, my debate has changed some of the opinions of the members opposite to understand that it isn't everything bad. We actually have a lot of really good stuff here, so please look past your own bogeyman at the end of your face or your mask.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to take a moment to speak to Bill 76, the Captive Insurance Companies Act. We live in a world of increasing risk, much greater uncertainty in many respects. We have large shifts in our economies. We certainly have, as has been discussed by many members tonight from different and varying perspectives, the challenges of a shifting climate and indeed the issues that come with that. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie quite accurately observed that we are seeing a significant increase in catastrophic events around the world arising from climate change.

We have seen many of those incidents here in the province of Alberta. Certainly, we have seen some record floods, we have seen severe hail, and we have seen our share of wildfires though this past year we have thankfully not seen the kinds of impacts we have in previous years, but I do recall this past summer being in the Crownsnest Pass, a place I have been many times before, and for the majority of my stay not being able to see the majority of the peaks in the region, peaks that I know and love very well but could not see because of wildfire smoke, something I had never seen at that level in that region before in the many summers that I have spent there.

We recognize that there are real and significant issues, and those things are related. The major shifts we are beginning to see happening in our global economy, particularly around the energy sector, are related to those significant impacts we are seeing from the advancement of man-driven climate change, that we as a human species through the burning of fossil fuels have caused this increase in the global temperature, an increase that is going to continue and that we have to work to mitigate. As part of that, we have different people taking different approaches to how they advocate on that, and what we are talking about here tonight with Bill 76 is, as has been observed by members from different perspectives, part of those impacts.

We have energy companies that are in a difficult position and unable to find traditional insurance at all or at rates they can afford. Again, I would recognize that with these catastrophic events that is something that is occurring for many individuals. We are seeing significant rises in insurance for people's homes and properties as a result of these catastrophic events. Now, we have seen much less action, of course, from this government towards helping those individuals, but that does not preclude that perhaps in this situation we do need to make this intervention to support these companies. We could certainly be doing both/and, Madam Speaker, even if the government is only choosing to do one at the time. Recognizing that there may be reasons for this legislation, certainly, at this point I haven't heard any of my colleagues – and I'm not saying that I would – oppose this legislation. Certainly, we have some questions and would like to get some more information and better understand.

Now, one of the things, as we are talking about risk here, that does stand out to me is that with these captive insurance companies sections 10 through 12 of this legislation establish different investment restrictions than are allowed with traditional insurers. Simply put, these captive insurance companies are allowed to take on more investment risk than a traditional insurer.

9:10

What we're being asked tonight, you know, with this bill is that we're being asked to authorize this government through regulation to determine what those more complex and higher risk investments are going to be, how that's going to work. We're being asked to authorize this government to allow that and to supervise that. Now, I think we have good reason, as some of my colleagues have noted, to question this government's ability to evaluate risk.

[The Speaker in the chair]

For example, if we consider the situation with AIMCo and, of course, these very ministers passing legislation to seize teachers' pensions, force them to adopt AIMCo as their sole investment management just before AIMCo came under scrutiny in spring 2020 when their investment managers lost \$2.1 billion . . . [interjection] No thank you, Minister.

. . . on a risky investment strategy known as the volatility trading strategy, or VOLTS. Now, that strategy cost the heritage fund \$411 million, was partly responsible for Alberta's nest egg hitting its

lowest value in eight years, led to their CEO leaving AIMCo. Of course, this government then was also considering and continues to consider potentially forcing all Albertans to put the CPP dollars in those hands. Now, certainly, we have a new CEO at AIMCo, and he has shown much more prudence. I think we have perhaps a better hope and picture there. But again that speaks to the ability of this government to evaluate risk, much as their failed and rather embarrassing 1 and half billion dollar gamble on the re-election of Donald Trump with the KXL pipeline. So on that front . . . [interjection] Again I would say no thank you, Member. I'm not interested in an intervention at this time. What we are seeing with this government is indeed that they have a very poor history of evaluating the value of risk.

Indeed, most notably, I'd say, with the most recent fourth wave of COVID in this province we had a government which gambled on lifting all public health restrictions, ignored multiple warning signs that it was a bad bet, and again . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Shepherd: . . . refused to take action until it was too late.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Schow: As is usually the case, Mr. Speaker, I rise in a point of order, 23(b)(i), on this member, who fails to usually stick to the substance of the bill, and this instance is no different. I've heard everything from COVID response to AIMCo losses to outright fabrications of the truth. I would encourage the Member for Edmonton-City Centre to get back to the bill at hand rather than give his opinions on matters not germane to this bill regarding captive insurance.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see no reason to apply section (b). This is not a point of order. The member was certainly creating a picture with the context of the current situation and applying it to the legislation at hand. I find that he should not be ruled out of order.

The Speaker: I'm prepared to rule on the point of order. I think that what we have here is a matter of debate. I will allow the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre to continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; \$12,000 well spent. As I was saying . . .

The Speaker: I'm pretty sure that's not part of the bill, though.

Mr. Shepherd: I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Now, as I was speaking to, this government is talking about giving insurers additional risk, the ability to take on more investment risk than traditional insurers. That will be determined – exactly how that will take place, the types of insurance products, et cetera, that these captives could offer – in the regulations. At some point during this debate it would certainly be, I suppose, welcome to hear from the minister perhaps what is under consideration and what direction he may be considering going

with that particular part of the bill, and we will look forward to that opportunity.

But at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 49 Labour Mobility Act

[Adjourned debate October 28: Member Loyola]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has some time remaining should he choose to use it.

Mr. Loyola: Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. member has five minutes remaining.

Mr. Loyola: So much to say and so little time, Mr. Speaker. Other members across the way get a little excited when I get up to talk because, as the way that the member had stated, I like to speak about reality from my perspective. [interjection] They laugh again, of course, as if that's something strange, as if my perspective is supposed to match theirs. See, that's the kind of world that they live in. They want everybody to just agree with them.

Mr. Yao: No. That's your tack. That's the left.

Member Loyola: No. See? And then they belittle and make fun of people for not believing what they believe, which, in fact, is their perspective, Mr. Speaker. [interjection] Sure. Please go ahead. Maybe you can talk some sense into them.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I'm really happy to have the opportunity to interject and add to the discussion. One of the speeches . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Schow: Now, Mr. Speaker, I know you heard that. I'm rising under 23 (h), (i), and (j). The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie as he was sitting down and accepting the intervention, which is customary in this place now, and it's new for everyone, I know: "Maybe you can talk some sense into them." Like, if we're asking for decorum, as they are at this moment in time, maybe they can give some a little bit as well. I certainly find that language to be unparliamentary, unbecoming of a member of the Legislative Assembly, and certainly ask the member to apologize, withdraw. Let's move on with debate.

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, I'm at a loss to understand exactly what the objection is. I didn't hear anything out of order. Perhaps if you heard something, you might be able to rule on it, but as of this point I certainly didn't pick up on anything unparliamentary.

The Speaker: I am happy to rule on it, and I did have the opportunity to hear what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie said, and I do agree that making such comments like "you can talk some sense into them" is unparliamentary. He's happy to apologize and withdraw, I'm sure.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, I apologize and withdraw.

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

Debate Continued

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is on an intervention. She has 50 seconds remaining.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I am reminded of some of the other speeches I have heard the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie deliver in this place. Certainly, his experience as a working person in this province is something that stands out to me. We're here talking about labour mobility, and that's something that, of course, I think is a matter of appropriate concern and discussion in this House. I'm reminded of a speech he gave about when times were really tough and how he rolled up his sleeves, bought a lawn mower, and started a business. I was thinking that this might be an opportunity to talk about some of the other working people in this province who are feeling left behind by the current government. I certainly welcome additional opportunities to learn about this member's lived experience and his small business.

Thank you.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora for that interjection. Most definitely. See, like, the members from the other side of the House think that they're the only ones that actually know how to start a business from the ground up, as if nobody else has done it but them.

Mr. Yao: No.

Member Loyola: Yeah, and here we go again. They can heckle all they want when I'm talking about perspective, but they're not willing to listen to the perspective that I have even though I've had – I won't say the same experience as them but a very similar one to them of starting a business from literally the ground up, Mr. Speaker. As the Member for Edmonton-Glenora rightly remembered, it started off with a lawn mower, and it turned into a landscaping business and a finishing carpentry business employing over eight people at one time. I would ask the members from the other side that they listen to the perspective. That's all it is. In this House we all have the right to speak to the perspective that we have. All I'm asking is for the other side to acknowledge that I am also having a human experience.

9:20

Mr. Yao: Mr. Loyola, I'm here. Acknowledge me.

Member Loyola: I'm the one who's speaking right now. Hopefully, you'll have a chance to speak a little bit later, Member, but I'm wanting to finish up what I have to share in this House.

I'll be quite honest with you. It's getting a little dry, Mr. Speaker, that when other perspectives are shared inside of this House, they are belittled. You are made to feel less than. You're made to feel like you're not intelligent just because you have an alternative perspective and not only that. This is not only my perspective; this is the perspective of many of my own constituents. [interjection]

The Speaker: I'd just remind the Assembly that the member has actually already taken three interventions, two prior to this evening in his opening remarks. He now has – anyway, he's taken three interventions after the third.

The hon. member.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, again, all I'm doing is speaking to perspective, and I wish that I would get

a little bit of respect from the other side of the House. That's all I'm asking for.

As it relates to Bill 49, Labour Mobility Act, as I continue with my time inside of the Assembly that I may express my concerns and the concerns of my constituents and that of many Albertans, I wanted to basically bring to the discussion that in Bill 49 with an appendix list comes a number of occupations that the bill, in fact, would be creating the opportunity for people to become accredited within the province. I'm not going to belabour the fact that, you know, this party is basically chasing people out of Alberta, but what I do have a question about is that it doesn't even seem to match the short-term employment forecast of the government or what's in the long-term forecast, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the list of occupations, they don't match.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think this is my first speaking opportunity this evening, so, to my colleagues, I appreciated the debate on Bill 76, and I'm happy to address Bill 49 in this Assembly. I want to say that the title of this bill around labour mobility, I think, is an important topic for us to be discussing in this place.

Certainly, I can tell you that a lot of the folks I've been hearing from recently, particularly over the last year and a half, have been very concerned about the direction that this government has taken in a number of areas. I think some of them, I know some of them have resulted in net negative migration. For the first time in a decade Alberta has experienced this net negative loss in terms of interprovincial mobility, and that certainly, I think, is an indicator of how some Albertans are feeling. Particularly, I had Albertans reach out to me or when I've reached out, they've told me that many health care workers, specifically doctors and nurses who I've spoken to over the last year and a half, many have expressed that they are either looking or have already accepted positions in other jurisdictions. That, of course, is a big concern.

Something that I was quite proud of while we were in government, just a few short years ago, was the fact that we had some labour rest and we had some stability in health care for probably the first time since AHS was created. Instead of having a government that embraced that opportunity that was created for them and working closely with doctors and with nurses and with all health professionals, the government chose to take a very different path.

Certainly, I will say that the first time I attended the AMA's, Alberta Medical Association, representatives forum, it's a little bit nervous being in a room full of hundreds of doctors who certainly have an opinion and are very keen to share it with you as their Health minister, but I have to say that the conversations, I think, were really good. I don't believe we missed a single representatives forum in the entire four years I had the honour of serving as the Minister of Health, and I think Alberta's public policy as it came to its relationship with doctors was better because of it.

I also want to thank the nurses, specifically UNA, for all of the opportunities they created, and CARNA did many as well. For me to engage with front-line nurses and to hear their policy feedback and get from them good advice from the front lines, that, I think, helped us set a good path.

What nurses and doctors who are looking at leaving the province are telling me is that the compensation isn't the number one issue. The hours aren't even the number one issue even though there are many, many nurses who choose to work part-time so that they can have some control over their life, many who have family obligations and want to be able to control some of their hours. That

certainly hasn't been the case for most of them over the last year and a half. The hours aren't even the primary concern. The primary concern, they tell me, is that they feel that their employer has lack of consideration for their expertise. They feel that their employer, the government of Alberta, has lack of consideration for their safety. They feel that their employer, the government of Alberta, actively ignores science and evidence when it comes to making decisions around public health care and the safety and well-being of staff who work in health care as well as the general population. And they feel that the current government has little respect for their children. That has come back to me a few different ways.

One, of course, is feedback on the state of safety and well-being when it comes to the education system right now. Another one, a very big one, is around the province's approach to curriculum and the way that the province has chosen to hire insiders, which was confirmed earlier this morning – that wasn't done through an open competition – and allies of the Premier who have very clearly documented opinions that are racist. I was going to qualify the word "racist," but it doesn't need qualification. When you look at the quotes of this specific individual and the long documented history, it is incredibly problematic. That's one example within the curriculum. Another one, of course, is the fact that active teachers, who used to be active in the actual drafting process and were active partners – there was actually a ministerial order that guided that relationship. That ministerial order was rescinded, torn up, ended, and teachers no longer were given the opportunity to be active partners in shaping the curriculum.

I will have much more to say, but I want to ensure that I have an opportunity to address an amendment that I'm proposing, Mr. Speaker. I will keep one copy, not the original, pass the rest to you, and continue when you direct me to do so.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this amendment will be referred to as REF1.

The Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks. May I have a time check, too, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Eight minutes and 48 seconds.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. When it comes to referral 1 – and I'll read it into the record – I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 49, Labour Mobility Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 49, Labour Mobility Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

9:30

Let me start by saying that I have great respect for the work and the potential of standing committees. I think that we use them most effectively probably during estimates. That's definitely one of the times when members of both sides and, as well, independent members would have an opportunity to engage in the inner workings and the financial matters related to a variety of ministries, and I think the work that is done through standing committees during estimates is something that is of benefit to this Assembly, to the members, and to democracy overall. I do have to say that I think there is great potential for them to be used even more effectively during additional times of the Legislative Assembly sitting and outside of session as well.

We've recently had a specific minister try to justify incidents that have happened in this building and blame them on the long hours during session, and rather than that, I think it's appropriate for us to

look at the way that we conduct ourselves, the business that we conduct in this place, and the different opportunities we have to demonstrate to the public our significant desire to seek to improve the condition of all, which we're reminded of every single day, right? I think that when it comes to opportunities for Albertans to achieve and seek full employment within their province, that should be a significant goal, and I think: what committee could be more perfect than the committee that's supposed to look at Alberta's economic future, right?

So often, I know, we replace focus on the important with focus on the urgent, and the urgent often doesn't lead us to the long-term, positive outcomes that we could see. Often in this place there will be bills brought in that are addressing stopgap measures and short-term situations because there is a specific urgent need, but is it a long-term, important goal? I think there are times where you can achieve both. You can focus on the short-term, important need, but you could also create conditions that will improve the condition of all.

I want to say specifically that when it comes to economic diversification and creating opportunities for every child who lives in Alberta to see themselves staying here long term and working in the field of their choice, that is one of the big goals that parents regularly talk to me about. They talk to me about the curriculum, which I've mentioned. They talk to me about their concerns that the curriculum isn't setting their children up for success, that the curriculum is coming from a specific bias or a specific angle.

Francophone parents have highlighted the fact that there isn't a single francophone school anywhere in the province of Alberta that's willing to pilot the draft curriculum. They usually start by saying: "Thank goodness. We're glad that we're not experiencing that in our child's classroom, that we're not being exposed to that." And then they go on to say, "But how can it possibly be argued that, you know, a pilot that has no francophone school input, no public, Catholic, or francophone input when it comes to social studies or the science curriculum at all can be considered a proper, valid place to test something when it hasn't been tested in any francophone classrooms for any of the content or in any public, Catholic, or francophone classrooms for the social studies or science curriculum?"

You know, the government claims to care a lot about the basics. Social studies and science are pretty basic. We should probably make sure that we're creating a curriculum that teachers and parents and educational experts are excited by. These people dedicate their careers to this work. Many people in this province have been recognized nationally and internationally for their contributions in this work and have been treated by this government in such a way that it has resulted in very public attacks against their credibility and their expertise when they have been recognized locally, nationally, and internationally for their credibility, for their expertise, for their knowledge, for their commitment.

When we talk about net negative migration, I hope that members of this place are thinking about the culture that's being created and what they're hearing back from many of their constituents, and I know that it's not just me as the Education critic or me as an NDP MLA who lives in Edmonton. I had the opportunity to read correspondence written by a UCP member, a private member, a former cabinet minister, the Member for Grande Prairie, who very clearly articulated pages in summary of the very negative feedback that she received about the curriculum. So if she's receiving it, likely all of us are receiving it, and I will say that there is nothing that parents care about more than their children and their children's opportunity for a bright future.

When I talk to newcomer families who've immigrated from other countries to Canada and specifically to Alberta and I say, "What are

some of the reasons why you chose to make your home here?" one of the first things that's usually mentioned is opportunity through education, public education, that commitment that every child receives a world-class education. That is absolutely being eroded under this current government, and it is absolutely impacting how parents feel about their child's opportunity for success and, in turn, their own family's opportunity for success.

I appreciate that we have a bill that is looking at one aspect of labour mobility. I think that it would be wise for us to consider some of the underlying themes that families are experiencing right now as they continue to determine where and how they choose to raise their families. This is a serious concern that I hope members on both sides of this House are really taking an opportunity to unpack.

I do think that, again, this Committee on Alberta's Economic Future would be an excellent place for us to have an opportunity to engage in this legislation a little bit more. I think that this piece of legislation has probably many beneficial pieces and probably opportunities for improvement, and I think that when we come here, we can be collaborative, and we can find ways to make sure that labour mobility is offering a net benefit to the people of Alberta. A lot of Albertans, I have to say, are still struggling to put together a robust family income to be able to have home ownership as an outcome, that I think every Alberta family – you know, anyone who works a full-time job should be able to aspire to home ownership.

Honestly, I'm thinking about a constituent who lives on AISH who every now and then reaches out and says: "Do you think there's any chance I'll ever be able to own anything in this community? I really like living in this neighbourhood. Do you think I'll be able to one day buy a small condo?" One of the difficulties in this work is that, of course, you want to be there and you want to be supportive, but you also want to be honest. By taking away indexing – maybe to members in this place indexing for inflation wasn't a huge, onerous impact for them, to some; for others, certainly it is. In seeing that minimal cheque already be eroded, the opportunity for a productive home ownership situation, which would make him so incredibly proud, seems even more unattainable.

I do have to say that I think this would be a beneficial opportunity for us to refer this to committee and roll our sleeves up and work together to make it even better.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on amendment REF1 to Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act, I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Schow: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak this evening on the referral amendment moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I always enjoy a debate with that member. I would say that I will not be supporting this amendment, and I encourage members of this Chamber not to support this amendment, and I'll tell you why.

Mr. Speaker, this province has record-setting investment. We have nation-leading economic growth. This is an environment that is ripe for people to come to Alberta and find gainful employment, the kind of employment that people can be proud of, the kind of employment that builds a province, and, based on our previous history, what I suspect will be a rich history going forward, the kind of an economy that supports the rest of the country. We need a labour force able to meet the demands of this growing and robust economy. Just recently we had the incredible announcement of Dow Chemical coming to this province to set up shop with just an incredible investment, a record-setting, historic investment, all because of the environment, the economic environment, that this government has laid out.

To my point, Mr. Speaker, we cannot delay in getting this legislation passed. I would not presuppose the outcome of any vote, but I would say that I will be voting in favour of this legislation. I will not be voting in favour of this referral amendment because I believe it stands in the way of progress, progress that this province needs and progress that will further enrich the lives of so many Albertans.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and encourage all members to vote to not support this referral amendment moved by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Thank you.

9:40

The Speaker: On amendment REF1, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: I want to just refute some of the things that were just said, Mr. Speaker, as well as support my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora with her referral to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. You know, we do need a robust labour force in this province, and at this point in time, for the first time in 10 years, we have out-migration of people, including those who are of working age, and that's a problem. That is not an issue that will necessarily go away with the repair of our economy. It's going to take some time to repair. That will not be an issue that goes away quickly, because there are other things that people look for.

They, of course, look for job opportunities when they come here. In 1980 I came here from eastern Canada because of job opportunities. I'll have just a little bit of a digression here in talking about something else briefly for a second. When I look at the schedule and I see the Alberta College of Social Workers, in 1980, when I got here, it was not a regulated profession. There was no college at that point in time, and my employer looked at my university credentials and decided whether they wanted to hire me or not.

I do think it's a good thing that parts of this bill talk about facilitating the decisions of people who come here from Canada and have qualifications in one of these dozens of regulated professions and that they can get their qualifications reviewed and sit exams in a timely fashion if that's what they need to do. None of that existed when I got here in 1980. In the late '90s the College of Social Workers was established, and subsequent to then, people who come here and want to practise in this province have to sit exams and other kinds of references and things to get their registration.

But that's not the problem, Mr. Speaker. The problem is that people are leaving this province, and for the first time, as I said, in 10 years there is an out-migration of people, so we're losing people in this province. It hasn't happened in a long time, obviously, and we need to figure out more around why that is and how we can keep people in this province.

As my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora suggested, people come here for a variety of reasons. They come looking for a positive place to grow their families, for opportunity. They look for affordable housing. They look for a strong postsecondary education system. It doesn't take too long to look into the news of the day, Mr. Speaker, to see where another university, another college, another institute is saying that they have to lay off staff, that they have to pare down their faculties, that they have to reduce the number of programs that they offer, instructors that they provide to meet the significant cuts to the budget that they're being afforded by this UCP government.

I have a spouse, Mr. Speaker, who teaches at a postsecondary institution. She is a professor of nursing, and she tells me that many of her students are looking elsewhere once they graduate. They are

looking to the United States, they are looking to other parts of Canada because they're not confident that their future is in this province, in employment situations in this province.

Going back in time, I certainly remember the mid-1990s, when the former PC government of Ralph Klein was in this province. Now, I may be kind of remembering things somewhat catastrophically, but I remember that whole classes of nurses in this province, particularly those at Foothills hospital that were in training, were being sought after by employers in the United States. They would have job fairs at hotels adjacent to the Foot. Those recruiters were looking to bring our nurses, who had just gone through and were completing their studies after two years or three years of Foothills in-hospital training, down to California. They were bringing them down to Texas.

I've probably said this before in this House, Mr. Speaker, but once those professional nurses, trained here, working in the States, went down there – and they were, you know, in their early 20s for the most part – they found spouses, they found partners, and they have not returned to this province. The waste in the capacity of those young professionals: Alberta's loss in that case is palpable.

That's what this referral really gives us the opportunity to do in a transparent, an eyes-wide-open kind of way. What is it that we are finding that we are losing? We're net out-migration of professionals from this province. What is it they're not getting? What is it that is happening here besides the economic downturn that we've been in? Of course, we just heard from across the way that we're nation leading in economic growth. That's because of the base. That's because we've dropped so much, Mr. Speaker: 4 per cent from a significant drop is 4 per cent, but it's after losing a great deal. We need to figure out why our labour force isn't staying here and what we can do to ensure that they do.

My colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, of course, talked about other aspects besides postsecondary education. She talked about the education system in great detail, and she also mentioned about the health care system in significant detail as well. I won't repeat those things here, but it goes to the, I guess, environment writ large, not about the natural environment but the environment, the context in this province that people are seeing. They're seeing significant fights with labour, whether those are nurses and doctors and teachers, and they're asking themselves if they're in those professions: "Do I want this? Do I want to keep fighting? Do I want something better?" So they're looking elsewhere, and they're using their feet, Mr. Speaker, to uproot their families and go elsewhere.

I know personally a physician who has moved away from this province because of the significant fights that she was experiencing and the desire for something better, where her and her family can have some copacetic life together as opposed to always feeling upset. I know people who have taken that step and have been part of this net out-migration or loss of population from our province.

9:50

I know that we need to change and turn things around, Mr. Speaker, and it's not just the economy that's going to do that. I think there are aspects of this bill that certainly make good sense in terms of facilitating the attraction, the ability of people to see their way through, not quickly but relatively quickly, to the profession they want to be working in in a regulated fashion, but it doesn't fix the problems. The problems will continue to be there. It just means that, you know, we'll have a churn in this province, and that's not where we want to be. That's not building up, keeping our capacity in this province.

So anything we can do to retain the people and the labour and the skilled specialists we have should be done, we need to do. If we don't do it, as I said, we'll not learn, we'll not have an understanding

of why people are leaving and going elsewhere. It's not an insubstantial amount, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta invests in young professionals. It invests a great deal, and we need to keep them here. The fact that they're deciding to go elsewhere is, frankly, not only our loss as a province, but it's really short-sighted. So I think that a referral, having an opportunity where we can look at what the challenges to our economic future are together, is where we need to go.

The critic area I'm involved with is Municipal Affairs, and like young professionals who go elsewhere or even older professionals who decide to just throw in the towel because of all of the disagreements going on in this province, I can tell you that municipalities are feeling that same sort of not being respected, you know, feeling always concerned and upset because they're not listened to, Mr. Speaker. Decisions are made without them being understood, the impact and implications at the municipal level. Things like MSI were cut unilaterally from municipalities, and that's just like professionals who are saying: my job is being changed without our involvement.

It's because there's limited money that this government is putting into budgets for our most important things in society, namely health care, postsecondary education, and education. I know that municipalities have the same sorts of concerns around this government. They don't feel, as I said, listened to and respected, and decisions are being made without their involvement. That's just like – our citizenry in many cases feels the same way, and we need to change that, Mr. Speaker, and that's why a referral to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future is a requirement for us going forward so that we can get a better handle together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stand and speak against this referral motion, that doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. The member talks about migration out of the province and that we need to fix this. We want to kick the can down the road for another six months or eight months: it just doesn't make any sense at all. He talks about the migration due to the fact that we had four years of NDP government, chasing \$10 billion of investment out of the province.

You know, I got my trade tickets in 1981, and we were in the middle of a pretty significant boom at that time. Refinery Row, Imperial Oil – I worked on the construction of that refinery – Gulf refinery, Husky, Shell, Scotford: all of these things were going on at the same time. I was on a bus one day going to the site out at Imperial Oil. Thirty pipefitters on the bus; I was the only one from Alberta. We need those guys back here again. We're heading down that direction.

The Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity, although it isn't getting picked up, looks at close to \$30 billion of investment just that they've announced in the last six months or are announcing, you know, before Christmas. This is significant. We need these guys back here. We can't wait. We need to start recruiting now, building up that capacity, and getting these guys here. We're going to be down there again.

My colleague from Fort McMurray is always talking about the significant growth up there. A lot of folks call that Little Newfoundland. I worked at the plants up there back in the '80s again, you know, on some steam lines up there, and I remember going into the dining hall on the long weekend. I was on a shift up there. It was a long weekend. A lot of guys couldn't go home, so

the Newfies would get together around the dartboard and sing songs from Newfoundland and reminisce. Some of them got quite emotional about not being able to go home, but they moved here. Fort McMurray is very significant, with a lot of Newfoundlanders and New Brunswickers.

Bonnyville is the same thing. I've got good friends that I worked with up there for 25 years that moved down here, raised their families down here because there were opportunities here. They're still here. Yes, there was some migration, but those folks will come back. When we have the stability of \$30 billion worth of investment that's going to last for 10 years, those folks will come back. We need them here.

The member also talked about doctors leaving. I know personally two doctors that have left our province and moved to B.C. One of them is now seeking locum status in Alberta because she can't get enough hours and enough shifts in B.C. to pay her way, because their housing is three times the price. They sold their house here, moved to B.C. at three times the price, and can't get the shifts to pay the bills. [interjection] Oh. Would you like to intervene? Okay. I accept that.

Mrs. Frey: If you'd like to give way.

Mr. Hanson: Intervention?

Mrs. Frey: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Hanson: I've needed an intervention for a long time, but go ahead.

Mrs. Frey: Well, you know, you said it, Member.

I just wanted to take the opportunity to rise really quickly and point out to you, Mr. Speaker, of course, that the Brooks Bandits are now beating the Olds Grizzlys 9 to 1.

But I also wanted to ask the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul if he could elaborate on the number of workers from Alberta that were going to other provinces under the NDP and just how much of a disaster their government was for our energy sector, because I know that he has a lot of experience in that.

I just wanted to once again say: Brooks Bandits, 9; Olds Grizzlys, 1. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I think I've provided some significant caution to members about the relevance of interventions and only being prior to the speech or the comments that were given of that speech. I'm certain that the hon. member didn't mention the score of a lowly hockey game.

Mr. Hanson: I was about to actually talk about hockey scores and how important it is to the province as well, so I welcome the intervention and the question.

You know, I remember a portion of the time when the national energy program came in from the previous Trudeau government. You literally could not buy a job here in Alberta, and a lot of my friends had to go and work in the refineries in Ontario as well and New Brunswick. It does work both ways. It's all about government policy, and we're on the verge of significant investment here in the province. We need to get that message out to our counterparts. I was with local 488 at the time, in the '80s, and we had travel cards from all over the country and the U.S. coming up here to work. We need to get that message out. Thirty billion dollars of investment: that's the news story that we need to get out to Albertans and to the rest of Canada and North America. I'm very, very happy to be part of that, so I'll be voting against this referral.

10:00

The Speaker: Are there others? In the name of going back and forth, we will see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, and that will be followed by the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. Edmonton-City Centre, followed by Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 49 and the referral from my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora. I am in support of this referral amendment, which I know is a stunning surprise to all of my colleagues here in the House.

You know, this is a bill, Mr. Speaker, that has the possibility of having some fairly far-reaching consequences for all of the organizations to whom this bill applies. Now, I don't think any of us disagree with wanting to have an efficient and streamlined system to bring qualified workers in from other parts of Canada when, in fact, our province needs them. Indeed, we have no objection to legislation which is going to accomplish that, but there are a wide number of organizations and regulators that are involved here, and they do have important work in ensuring that the individuals who are doing some of these very important tasks and in some cases fairly complex work are properly qualified and meet the standards to accomplish that work in Alberta.

Now, the government tells us that indeed they held consultations with regulators, organizations, but as I've said in this House before, we have heard about this government's reputation on consultation. My colleague for Edmonton-Glenora spoke at length or at least for a bit about the issues with this government's curriculum, and certainly that has shown their penchant for coming to the table having already determined what they intended to do. Indeed, in many cases we have had groups that have been left out altogether, as has been noted in, for example, their recent consultations on establishing an Alberta police force and the chiefs of the Treaty Six confederacy noting that they were entirely left out of that conversation. Certainly, we have good reason to question what consultations the government heard, particularly because there is no documentation. The government has not tabled a what-we-heard document. They have not issued a list of who they spoke with. They have not provided any context. They've simply brought this bill before the House.

Taking this to committee would give us the opportunity to ensure that all those regulators and other folks, other organizations, that are involved in important and essential work in vetting and verifying professionals that are coming to work in this province have been consulted on that we are not going to find ourselves in a situation with, to use a term that was very popular with many of these members when they sat on this side of the aisle, unintended consequences.

In particular, this is not something that is simply coming from myself and my colleagues; this is coming from analysis from independent third parties. Now, my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods was kind enough to forward to me some analysis that has been done by Field Law. Field Law is a business law firm that is listed as one of the largest firms in Canada, with offices right here in Edmonton and indeed in Calgary. They've taken the opportunity to take a look at Bill 49 and provide their perspective as an independent third party. One of the things they note is that "one of the . . . noteworthy aspects of [this bill] is the limited amount of information that a regulator can require a labour mobility applicant to provide." So, again, the regulator: it is their job to make sure this individual is qualified, that there are no issues, that there are no concerns before they begin working in the province.

Now, according to Field Law the regulator can require that applicants “provide proof of certification in a Canadian jurisdiction,” but they can’t actually require that applicant “to provide any additional information unless that information is prescribed in the regulation.” So again we have a question about: what is the government actually going to consider? How streamlined do they want to streamline this process? To what extent are they going to restrict regulators from perhaps asking about crucial information?

Now, Field Law goes into greater depth on this because they know that, you know, this legislation, in fact, supersedes all other legislation. So, again, if this bill says that they cannot ask about any other information, that overrides anything else like, for example, the Health Professions Act in terms of regulating how health professionals under that act could come and work in the province of Alberta. Field Law, in fact, goes in depth, and they posit: “Can a regulator ask a labour mobility applicant for information focused on good character such as whether they have any outstanding complaints or investigations in their home jurisdiction?” At this point that would be up to the regulations. We do not know how restrictive the government might choose to be, the minister might choose to be in drafting these regulations and whether or not that is a question that will be allowed to be asked of an individual applying to come and work in our province.

Now, let’s remember that within this bill the professions that are covered include a wide swath of occupations, for example, in health care alone: acupuncturists, audiologists, chiropractors, dental assistants, dentists, denturists, physicians and surgeons, physiotherapists, psychologists, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, social workers. Let’s think about that. Those are individuals who are going to be in many cases in a very intimate position with the people that they are going to be providing care services to. I think it is absolutely important and essential that a regulator be able to ask that sort of question, whether they have any outstanding complaints or investigations in their home jurisdiction.

Now, indeed, at one point while we were in government, I know we had some very robust discussion around concerns about actions that were taken by physicians and ensuring that if they were sanctioned, that sanction stuck because of the impact that could have on future patients and individuals and indeed that very thing, that individuals could choose to move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction to evade those types of sanctions or things that might be on their record.

So Field Law is identifying and saying that currently under this legislation it would supersede anything in the Health Professions Act. The question is: what is going to go into those regulations? This is something – again, perhaps the government heard feedback on this. We don’t know because, again, they have not published any of the information about who they consulted with and what, in fact, they heard during those consultations. We don’t know if they were short or long. We don’t know if they were robust or incredibly thin.

So I don’t think it’s unreasonable, then, to say that perhaps this would be best referred to committee, where we’d have the opportunity to have those discussions and sit down and hear from these regulators and perhaps indeed invite individuals like Field Law, who have kindly provided some of their analysis to ensure that we are understanding a significant step that we are taking as a province if this bill is passed and indeed that is pioneering amongst any other jurisdiction in Canada and goes further than any other province has gone.

If indeed, Mr. Speaker, we are stepping out first, I think it is prudent for us to step carefully and thoughtfully, which is another reason why I support this referral amendment and the opportunity to take this to committee.

Field Law notes – they ask that question. “Can a regulator ask the information required by the Health Professions Act relating to criminal records and sexual abuse issues?” Again, which is superseded by Bill 49. Their answer is “not likely.” Not likely, Mr. Speaker, “unless this information is specified in the regulations under [Bill 49].” They say that section 6(1) and (2) of the LMA, of Bill 49, “have the potential to be very problematic for regulators unless the regulations are properly drafted.”

10:10

So in some respects, Mr. Speaker, what we are being asked to do right now is to write the government a fairly significant blank cheque on, again, a piece of legislation unlike any which has been passed in any province in Canada to date.

Again, I won’t go into it extensively, but I think my colleagues and I have given many reasons why we do not have that good faith in this government. I think the opportunity for us to take this to committee, to hear thoroughly from regulators and others who were involved, to ensure that something as significant as ensuring that individuals that are coming to work in medical fields in the province of Alberta are clear of criminal records and potential issues of abuse, that we are going to get these regulations right.

Again, we are not objecting to the general principle of the legislation, to the idea that we want to make it easier for skilled professionals to come and do their work in the province of Alberta. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I think very highly of our province despite many of the ways in which this government, I think, has undermined the quality of life and certainly many of the important systems and institutions of this province. That’s not something from which we can’t recover should we have the opportunity to elect a better government in 2023.

I think there are still many reasons why we could potentially attract people to the province of Alberta if we reverse damaging cuts to postsecondary, the undermining of our health care system, the incredibly problematic curriculum that the government seems to be intent on forcing through. But if we are going to put legislation in place to facilitate that, let us make sure that we have thought this through, that we fully understand the implications, that we know precisely how these things are going to go. Field Law notes that “regulators will need to engage with the government in the regulation development process to ensure that unintended consequences do not arise that negatively affect public protection.” That is the job of government, Mr. Speaker, to protect the public.

Now, certainly, I’ve spoken extensively in this House and probably will again about how this government has utterly failed on that in things like the fourth wave of COVID-19 and, unfortunately, put their politics first. But, certainly, as we look to potentially pass legislation in this House, we want to ensure that the government is fulfilling that duty, that they are stepping up to the plate.

Indeed, as Field Law says, “regulators will need to engage with the government.” As I said, we at this point do not know to what extent this government has actually engaged with the regulators in the province. There are a lot of them, Mr. Speaker. I noted just a few of the health occupations that are listed here. Then, of course, we have things under Justice like lawyers, locksmiths, private investigators, security workers, teachers. Teachers. Again, speaking of things like the regulation, indeed ensuring that teachers coming do not have issues on their record, previous problems. Also, for the ATA that is going to create some problems unless these regulations are drafted very carefully. We have things like early childhood educators. We have folks in agriculture. We have architects, interior designers, professional engineers, geologists, accountants, forest technologists, land surveyors, veterinarians.

Mr. Speaker, we have dozens if not well over 100 regulators that would be involved in this process. Has the government, in fact, sat down and spoken with each and every one of them? Each of the ministers that are involved in that: have they actually sat down and considered the different impacts on each of those sets of regulations? We don't know because, again, the government has not published any list of whom they have spoken with or, indeed, any documentation about what they spoke about when they did. For all we know, it could have been a matter of days. It could have been weeks. It could have been months. We don't have that information, but we know that this has a significant impact for all of these bodies and indeed for these workers coming to the province and from that flowing, then, to the Alberta public.

I don't think it's unreasonable given that case – unless the government wants to show its homework and give us more information about who they precisely spoke with and indeed what those conversations were and table that here in this Legislature, where we could have the opportunity, then, to incorporate that as part of our debate. Given that they have not done that to date and have not shown any intention of doing so, I think it is reasonable that we then ask to move this to committee, where we'll have that opportunity to ensure that protection for Albertans.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland still if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Getson: Let's make it really quick, Mr. Speaker, because we want to get back on the main bill. I did some quick back-of-the-napkin calculations here. If I'm looking at the dollars and cents for spending in this place, it's about \$350 a minute. So the member just blew about \$3,000 here talking about something. We should go back to the main bill.

The question of why folks are leaving the province: they're going to other jurisdictions where there is work. They're going to other jurisdictions where there are lower taxes. We worked really hard at the start of this to make sure that we could pull together a fulsome package so that we could get workers coming across the province to come into the area, in the jurisdictions. We talk a lot about the work. Some others are burning down the province; the rest of us are trying to pull it together.

With that, I encourage everybody to vote down the motion. Let's get back on the main bill, and let's spend the taxpayer dollars appropriately.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Get back to some sensible conversation. I want to address the issue of the reason for referral first off in my conversation and then provide a little bit of a larger context for that argument. I know that the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul essentially made the argument: we have an immediate problem, so why don't we have an immediate solution? Why, you know, kick it down the road, I think was the expression used, for six months?

I think the answer is actually in the statement that the member made, that is he is acknowledging that this is about finding a quick fix for a problem, not a resolution of the underlying problem but, rather, a quick fix in order to be able to resolve a problem that exists. Of course, it has all of the downsides of all quick fixes. You know, when the table leg breaks and you decide to take the old lamp from the den and take off the light bulb and stick it underneath the table in order to hold it up, it will certainly provide the resolution that is necessary in the moment, but it presents you with a variety of future problems. For one thing, it doesn't look very good, but secondarily,

of course, it becomes dangerous. It's not really actually made to fit properly.

You know, the relationship between the quick fix and the larger existing entity is not a proper and well-constructed and well-designed fix, and I think that we have to be a bit careful when we say that the reason why we brought this bill into the House is because we've created a problem, and now we need to kind of jam in something in order to hold up the table long enough for us to move forward without understanding that that's inherently problematic. Just by its nature I think we should be cautious.

Now, I don't disagree with the quick fix from time to time. I have certainly been known to do a little clumsy craftsmanship with carpentry in my own life. I fortunately have a much wiser spouse, who understands that this will not stand long and will need to be replaced sooner rather than later. But legislation isn't of that nature. You don't bring in a quick fix knowing that you're going to have to replace it, you know, the second that the problems begin to arise, and you also shouldn't use a quick fix when you can actually take the time to do it right in the first place, when you can actually look at the problem and say that this is a systemic problem, a structural problem, an issue that has a depth and history behind it that can be addressed.

10:20

I think that's what we also need to address here at this particular time, that we cannot do if we do not have this referral, that is we have a problem in this province that for some reason well-minded citizens have decided to leave this province in droves. If that doesn't make you want to stop and say, "What the heck is going on that people are trying to get the heck out of town at this particular time?" then you're really missing the message of the mass exodus out of this province.

Of course, you know, this is the first time that this mass exodus has happened in many, many years in this province. I remember under the last government the now Premier made an accusation that there was a net migration out of the province to the previous government and had to apologize because, in fact, it was not true. In this case it is true. It is true that there is a net migration out of this province. If we're not going to use the quick fix, if we're not going to use the lamp from the den in order to fix the table, the broken table leg, then we should certainly be asking ourselves why it is that people are leaving this province.

That's the reason for a referral, because we get to ask that question in depth. We get to say: what is it about the defunding of universities and other postsecondary institutions in this province by this government that has caused people to become upset? What is it about the ongoing war with health workers and doctors and nurses that has caused people to be upset? What is it about the threat to take wages away from people who have saved us through this epidemic through their incredible ongoing devotion to the well-being and the health of this province that has caused them to feel like they need to leave this province? What is it about the behaviour of this government that has resulted in Albertans making a decision after often lifetimes of residency in this province and education and labour force participation in this province that has caused them to say that this province is no longer in the best interests of myself and my family? That's the kind of question that we need to be asking ourselves.

We need to be looking at the behaviours of a government that has caused people to be fearful for themselves and their family's future and to seek employment in other places because of the lack of hope that exists in a province that has been so aggressive in its neglect and disregard for the well-being of the professions that are mentioned in this act. Having a referral would allow us to actually

do the job right and to not just simply come in and apply a quick fix in order to be able to get through the moment.

I'm actually somebody who, as I mentioned in my previous comments on this legislation, believes in having open migration available for labour in this country. I think that there are some very positive reasons for us to have that happen, but in this case the reason why we have a problem that needs to be addressed is that the behaviour of this government has resulted in some very negative outcomes for this province and negative outcomes for individuals and their families.

That's what it is that I think we have to address, and I think that if we go back and we have those conversations, we can begin to say: what is it that we need to do to ensure that people who have been born and raised in Alberta, who have come to Alberta to participate in the betterment of this province actually believe that continuing to be resident in this province is a positive and good thing, that doctors who we have invested hundreds and thousands of dollars into their education actually turn that education back into the benefit of this province rather than taking the benefits of our elementary, high school, and postsecondary educations, taking all of that input that we have given them and delivering their services in another province? We should be asking that question.

We should be asking: what happened in the hospitals that makes you say that this is not where I want to stay? What is it that's happened in terms of the funding of hospitals, the funding of research, the funding of scientific endeavour that has resulted in your not believing that the knowledge you have gained and the skills you have acquired are best served by remaining in this jurisdiction? That's the kind of question I think that we can have answered if we have a referral to committee. As a member of the committee that we would like to have this referred to, I would be very anxious to have an opportunity to ask those kinds of questions.

I also would like to be able to have an opportunity to ask questions about: where are we going to have problems from applying this quick fix? I think the Member for Edmonton-City Centre identified some important points there, and I'd just like to reinforce some of those points because I think they are very much important. For example, the timelines in this bill, which again is showing how rushed this program is, are much reduced from the timelines that existed under the previous act, the Fair Registration Practices Act. I think that we have to ask ourselves: is there a reason why we're trying to rush this forward? Under the Fair Registration Practices Act registration organizations had an opportunity to spend six months to properly evaluate, but under this act it's as little as 10 days to receive information, 10 days to make a decision, and 10 days to inform. So, really, a decision is made at 20 days.

I have some concerns about that. As someone who has had to actually assess credentials of students coming from institutions other than the one in which I was working, it was fine if I had certainty that the credentials presented were in fact reflective of the institution that they say it was. It turns out that sometimes that is not true. People present credentials that actually are not validated in time. There was a horrendous case, for example, at MacEwan University once where they hired someone and kept them on for 20 years and found out after the fact that they didn't have any of the degrees they said that they had at all. That's a dangerous situation to put ourselves in.

It worries me that we will have institutions trying to make rash decisions rather than responsible decisions. What's more is that sometimes I might have known about an institution – if somebody came from McGill University, for example, I certainly know the institution – but if somebody came from a smaller university somewhere in eastern Canada, I often wouldn't know the name of it. I wouldn't recognize it. I wouldn't know whether that's a legitimate

institution to have provided the accreditation that the person presenting to me is saying that it provides. A little time to check that out is fine.

In addition, there is a concern with many professions that you are checking out more than simply the academic qualifications or the trade certification of individuals, but you're also trying to check out something that may be generally referred to as an ethical background check for potential candidates. We certainly have had incidents here in the province of Alberta. For example, I can remind people without using names of at least one doctor who had arrived here in this province who was essentially fleeing sexual assault allegations in another province and came here and was engaged in inappropriate sexual behaviour with patients, and that might have been determined if there was some time taken to check things beyond simply the credentials. Certainly, this doctor had the credentials necessary in terms of being an MD, but there were other problems.

I know in social work, for example, we don't simply ask people: do you have a degree? We also often ask them to provide a police check or a child welfare check. I know governments try to provide good services to citizens, but I can tell you that even the government of Alberta, under this government, is very rarely on top of things so well that they can provide both police checks and child welfare checks within a 10-day period. For many professions that's absolutely essential to ensure the well-being of the clients that will be served, well beyond the credentialing itself, yet your decision is only allowing 20 days for all of this to occur. So I'm concerned about that. I'm concerned about the rush here, and I'm concerned about this being a quick fix that's just going to try to repair a problem that's actually been created by other decisions of the government.

10:30

Let's go back to those other decisions. Let's take some time. Let's look at how we can actually improve circumstances here, how we can raise the people up in this province to fulfill the needs of this province without having to pull people in from abroad when instead it may be much more valuable to us over the long term to ensure that we are providing ourselves with a sufficient number of people and labour resources to meet the needs of our own province. That would be a good thing. As a member of the committee I would certainly love to have an opportunity to do that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has risen.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the referral amendment that we are currently on regarding Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act. I've had the pleasure and opportunity to speak to Bill 49 at second reading, and I rise in support of this amendment which would allow us to, at the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, really ask some in-depth questions as well as speak to stakeholders.

Now, I have a number of points I'd like to make regarding Bill 49 and the need to send this to committee, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost being that so much of the implementation of this bill and the impact of this bill on over a hundred regulated occupations has been deferred to regulation. So the key aspect of Bill 49 is going to be making sure that those regulations are drafted in full consultation with each of these regulated occupations, with these professions.

Leading into this, I think it's important to note that as I'm talking to stakeholders about this, there have been some real concerns about the consultation that has taken place thus far, that it was done in a

very quick manner in August of 2020. Some members who were consulted said that it felt more like information out, that the government had already chosen a decision, and quite a few were surprised when the bill was introduced here in this session. When we talk about the regulations, we're starting off on the wrong foot when I'm hearing directly from the heads of major organizations, saying that they did not feel that there'd been adequate consultation prior to the introduction of Bill 49.

Now, the second concern that I'd like to speak to is that the goals of this particular bill are goals that I think are important and that I support. Labour mobility, facilitating the registration of qualified professionals, ensuring that when someone has made the decision to come to Alberta that their credential recognition process can flow smoothly: I think this is really important.

One of the interesting things that I've found as I've been talking to stakeholders is that for a lot of the occupations that are being covered here, they already have mutual recognition agreements, long-standing agreements in place to meet or exceed the timelines outlined in this bill, meaning that the introduction of Bill 49, for a great deal of potential occupations, may have very little impact. It won't actually make a material difference in some cases of having qualified, skilled, trained Canadians coming to Alberta to find work. I think that's a really important aspect of this to be discussed because the government has put this bill forward under the Premier, not the minister of labour even, and is touting this as the major jobs bill of this session. Yet for so many of the organizations this impacts, they're already doing it. This isn't going to create a new job. This isn't going to bring a new person.

Now, there are some smaller organizations that are potentially going to have impacts, and given the wide range of organizations this is one of the reasons why I support it going to committee. There are some of the occupations and organizations that are essentially operating as a nonprofit, that are running with volunteers to do some of this credential recognition work, and I'm concerned that their perspectives and their voices may not have been heard through the consultation process.

Now, one of my first comments was around the deferral to regulations of major decisions in this bill. I would like to point out that we've seen something very similar in the Fair Registration Practices Act, the FRPA, that this Legislature saw debated in 2019 but also deferred to regulations, regulations that are still not complete at this point. The timelines that would allow someone who is foreign trained, from a country other than Canada, to know that their credentials would be recognized in a timely way: this government has not written and implemented them. So if this bill is deferring to regulations, exactly under what timeline are we looking at to have that done, and has that background work taken place?

A lot of these concerns I would be interested in discussing at the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future because we would have the opportunity to find out more about the potential impacts of this legislation as well as how it interacts with the Canadian free trade agreement, which already has clauses to guarantee labour mobility. The fact that so many have national accreditation and certification standards really causes me to question that when the government is talking about creating good jobs and attracting workers to Alberta, this is being presented as a solution, when I do not think that it is. And when we talk about attracting workers to Alberta, particularly now, having been through a pandemic, certainly I have concerns that the government is not focusing its attention where it should be. It's important that we be able to assess this and have those discussions at a committee.

One of the other concerns that I've certainly been made aware of – and I would thank my hon. colleague from Edmonton-City Centre who was referencing the Field Law analysis – is one that I've heard from stakeholders as well, which is the limitations by the regulation on the information that their organization would be able to request from someone who is applying for credential recognition, specifically when it comes to code of conduct type behaviour, when it comes to their professional standing in other jurisdictions – have there been other complaints? – some of those other more nuanced questions. The fact that the legal analysis from a leading law firm has identified this as well as stakeholders raises in me large concerns that we need to know that these types of concerns will be taken into account and can be addressed through further debate as well as the work done on this piece of legislation.

When it comes to sending a piece of legislation to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future or another, I do want to highlight that it gives all members an opportunity to be able to attend those committee meetings, review their records on *Hansard*, to ask questions, and to have certainly more in-depth analysis and discussion on a potential piece of legislation as well as the ability to call witnesses and guests to be able to speak to this piece of legislation and its potential impacts. For those reasons, I do support this amendment.

Bill 49 and the goals of the Labour Mobility Act I think are very important. But in its current implementation and given the concerns that I'm hearing from stakeholders, being told that there wasn't proper consultation, that too much is being deferred to the regulations, that similar regulations related to almost the identical challenge but speaking to foreign credential recognition have stagnated and not been completed in two years, these are major concerns that I think need to be addressed.

10:40

I do again want to recognize that so many of the organizations who have been named in Bill 49 operate at the highest professional and ethical standards, have been doing the work to ensure that there are not unnecessary delays in credential recognition. At the same time as I worry about the implementation of this bill, I simply have to ask if the government has really looked at what is facilitating workers to come here to Alberta and the factors involved.

When we see what's happening in our political system with this current government – the fighting with workers, doctors, and nurses, the challenges with the curriculum, which I've heard raised in the debate on Bill 49 already – when we see the mismanagement in the COVID-19 pandemic and then we ask, “Are people coming to Alberta?” the answer right now is that they are not. That change has been under the UCP government. That change of more youth workers not staying here, going to university elsewhere and choosing to leave Alberta, has happened under this UCP government. So many of our young people do not see their values reflected in this government, do not agree with the choices being made by this government. I think this is a really big issue. I know it is. Alberta has typically attracted the best and the brightest, and we're not seeing that happen now.

I've heard the members opposite try to deflect and to blame previous governments. The facts do not bear that out. The numbers and the statistics do not bear that out. It is under your government that youth and other Albertans are leaving this province, that we are seeing a net outflow of migration. I think that if members of the government caucus are not prepared to have an honest and open debate about that, we have some serious concerns, and again we would be able to have more of those discussions at the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

For these reasons, I will be voting in support of the amendment that my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora has put up. I thank her and other members for joining into this debate, and I appreciate the opportunity to share a few of my thoughts. I look forward to continued debate around Bill 49 about labour mobility, about attracting workers to Alberta, about creating good jobs and building Alberta as the best and brightest province, that we know it can be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others on REF1?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are back on the main bill. Are there others wishing to speak to it?

If not, I am prepared to call upon the Premier to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 49 read a second time]

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate everyone's hard work this evening. Albertans are well served by the members in this Chamber. At this time I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 9 a.m. Wednesday, November 3, 2021.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:45 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Government Motions	
Senate Nominees	5941
Division	5944
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 76 Captive Insurance Companies Act.....	5944
Bill 49 Labour Mobility Act.....	5951

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