



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 10, 2022

Day 32

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Third Session

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New Democrat: 23

Independent: 3

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Nate Horner	Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
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Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
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Jacqueline Lovely	Parliamentary Secretary to the Associate Minister of Status of Women
Nathan Neudorf	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Parks for Water Stewardship
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Searle Turton	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy
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Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

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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  
Irwin  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Walker

### **Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply**

Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Amery  
Frey  
Milliken  
Rosin  
Stephan  
Yao  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Dang  
Frey  
Gotfried  
Hunter  
Loewen  
Reid  
Sabir  
Smith

### **Select Special Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee**

Chair: Mr. Walker  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Allard  
Carson  
Dreeshen  
Ganley  
Long  
Sabir  
Stephan

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Milliken

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Ceci  
Dach  
Long  
Loyola  
Rosin  
Shepherd  
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van Dijken

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Rutherford  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon

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Irwin  
Long  
Nielsen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sigurdson, L.  
Singh  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Gotfried  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Renaud  
Stephan  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Lovely  
Pancholi  
Renaud  
Rowswell  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights**

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Ganley  
Hanson  
Milliken  
Nielsen  
Rowswell  
Schmidt  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 10, 2022

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, hon. members.

### Prayers

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

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 23 Professional Governance Act

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise and move second reading of Bill 23, the Professional Governance Act.

The proposed act will govern the 22 nonhealth professional regulatory organizations for which Labour and Immigration is responsible. The Alberta government delegates self-governing responsibilities for certain professions and occupations to professional regulatory organizations. These organizations are responsible for the governance, registration, conduct, and discipline of their registrants. They are also responsible for ensuring their registrants deliver services in a way that protects life, health, property, the environment, economy, and public interest of Albertans. A few examples are the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta, the Alberta Institute of Agrologists, Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta, the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, and the Alberta Association of Architects.

Currently, Madam Speaker, these 22 organizations are governed by an inconsistent and confusing patchwork of legislation, one that includes nine separate acts and 28 supporting regulations. This current patchwork has created inconsistencies and inefficiencies in how professional regulatory organizations are governed and operate. Some of the legislation is also outdated. The proposed Professional Governance Act will consolidate and streamline this patchwork into a single umbrella act with a minimal number of supporting regulations. This will make it easier for professional regulatory organizations to do their important work of protecting the public interest of Albertans. This act will provide a consistent and standard way for professional regulatory organizations to carry out their common core functions such as governance, registration, and addressing professional conduct and discipline.

We realize that some organizations and their professions may have unique needs and requirements. This will be addressed through adding profession-specific schedules into the regulations. We will develop those schedules in consultation with the professional regulatory organizations in the coming months.

Madam Speaker, the new act will provide a consistent process for professional regulatory organizations in similar fields who wish to amalgamate. Some organizations may find it more efficient to have a single source of governance for that profession. Some professions have successfully done this already such as accounting and forestry. The new legislation will set out a transparent process for deregistration and the registration of new professional organizations. Currently there is no consistent way for approving amalgamations, deregistration, or creating new professional regulatory organizations. The new act will provide that consistency.

Madam Speaker, professional regulatory organizations do a good job and contribute to the economic success of our province. I am confident that that will continue.

The new act provides for the appointment of a public administrator when a professional organization is no longer able to fulfill its obligations, act in good faith, or serve the public interest and public safety. This will be used only in exceptional circumstances when there is a clear threat to the public interest or the interest of public safety. For example, a professional regulatory organization may become insolvent and cease to operate, so they can no longer regulate their profession. Madam Speaker, I want to emphasize that this provision will be used only in rare and extreme circumstances. We strongly support professional self-governance. Bill 23 is designed to minimize government involvement with regulating professions as much as is possible or feasible. This option to appoint a public administrator would only be used as a last resort.

Madam Speaker, speaking of protecting the public interest, public members are essential to help professional regulatory organizations carry out their duties. The government appoints public members to the organizations' governing bodies to ensure the public interest is represented. Public members serve on professional regulatory organizations governed by this along with tribunals for complaints, discipline, or appeals. This will continue under the proposed Professional Governance Act, and it will continue in a more consistent and efficient manner. This includes creating a roster of public members which PROs can utilize for discipline tribunals and appeals.

Madam Speaker, Bill 23 will also bring professional legislation into the modern era. Some of the current legislation is more than 40 years old and didn't take technological advances or other changes into account. For example, the new act provides for electronic means of communication and the ability to hold meetings virtually.

The new act will also provide greater flexibility to professional regulatory organizations to manage the regulation of their respective professions. It does this by allowing PROs a greater ability to make bylaws to regulate their professions while still maintaining government oversight. This will ensure that professional regulatory organizations can be more responsive to changing needs and will also remove unnecessary government oversight. There will be less red tape, and it will be easier for organizations to make or change their own bylaws. It provides greater flexibility for self-regulating professions while retaining an appropriate amount of government oversight.

Madam Speaker, speaking of updates, the new act will align with a couple of other recent acts, the Labour Mobility Act and the Fair Registration Practices Act. The alignment is critical for reducing barriers for regulated professionals from other provinces and other countries. Their credentials can be recognized in Alberta more quickly and efficiently, and they can be recognized on a temporary basis to allow out-of-province professionals to work in Alberta on short-term projects or during emergencies. This helps our province attract the professionals we need to fill labour shortages and support Alberta's economy.

Madam Speaker, stakeholder input has been critical as we move forward with streamlining Alberta's professional legislation. Labour and Immigration met regularly with stakeholders throughout the development of the proposed Professional Governance Act. These included existing professional regulatory organizations and associations who may wish to become professional regulatory organizations in the future. Thanks to their valuable input, Bill 23 will serve the needs of self-regulating professions now and into the future and ultimately serve the needs of Albertans through protecting the public interest and public safety.

Madam Speaker, I am confident that Bill 23 will pass. After the bill passes, we will continue to engage with professional regulatory organizations as we develop the regulation and organization-specific schedules in the coming months. I am confident that their input will continue to help us make Alberta's professional legislation the best in the country. If passed, the Professional Governance Act will take effect upon proclamation, which is expected to happen in early 2023. I ask my colleagues in this Assembly to support Bill 23. By passing this bill, we can begin a new era for professional governance legislation in Alberta.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 23.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join the debate on Bill 23 in second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the minister for going through a high overview of what he believes Bill 23 will achieve for this province. You know, my own background with regard to some of this area – and maybe I'll just share – is not in the professional regulatory organizations, not here, because these are the 22 nonhealth PROs. It was the Alberta College of Social Workers, and I don't believe that's in this bill. I just scanned the 22, and I didn't pick it up. Perhaps I missed it.

**10:10**

I was a member of that organization for several years, had to provide information – to continue to be accredited, you had to provide information on an annual basis, and it was spot-checked or monitored or reviewed. I have some experience with a PRO, and they did great work and continue to do great work in regulating and making sure social workers throughout the province who use that designation have the appropriate skills to be able to assist Albertans in their needs.

The other aspect of my connection to this kind of work is the agencies, boards, and commissions. Of course, when I was Finance minister, we reviewed all – I think there were around 150 or more agencies, boards, and commissions that were connected to the province of Alberta. They had staff. They had significant roles. Like, AGLC – AGL Ceci – is one of those agencies, boards, and commissions. My role, our role was to harmonize, essentially, what the level of remuneration across those boards would be. There were kind of like A, B, C levels of remuneration based on the level of import, the level of responsibility, work that those agencies, boards, and commissions did. I kind of have some understanding of the challenges this area faces, potentially the minister.

You know, I support the desire to be consistent and efficient, of course. Those are kind of – "efficiency" was a word that came up regularly in the minister's speech. I think that's important. I think it's important to be transparent, of course, and to hold these PROs accountable for what they do and for them to hold their members accountable. It seems like a great deal of the impetus behind this work is around the whole idea of including professionals from other provinces and countries across the many responsibilities that we see: assessors, architects, landscape architects, agrologists.

Perhaps one of the better known ones in that list is APEGA and maybe the Veterinary Medical Association, not to say that the others aren't important.

**Ms Hoffman:** APEGA advertises more and represents a lot of people.

**Member Ceci:** Yeah. I was going to say the same thing. There are huge billboards across the province. It's something like: if you want to know how this building works, ask a member of APEGA because they helped design it.

That group, in my mind, has a stellar ability to regulate their own members, to include new members from other places, to make sure that the buildings that we are in are designed and built to the highest standards possible. It's curious that the kind of views that I heard the minister talk about in terms of making them better, making sure they do a good job, making sure they're stronger with this new act, that they'll be better as a result of this new act: I think they're already pretty good, APEGA being a good example of that.

I think also that the bill goes too far in many ways because the bill – not only is it difficult to get through and very convoluted and very confusing, but it leaves too much scope, in my view and the view of many people and perhaps stakeholders who have looked at this bill from a legal perspective. It provides too much scope to the minister in being able to address the bylaws and even the existence of some of these PROs that are out there. I think, just on a quick read of some of the areas and reflection on some of the feedback that I'm aware of, the legislation is confusing and leaves too much to regulations and schedules which are to come in the future.

The minister said that, you know, assent of this will be sometime early in the new year. That's to give opportunity and time for the regulations, I presume, to be written, so there's a lot that we're not seeing here, that's not transparent, that's not before us, that we're going to have to take the minister's word on that it will address the needs of PROs, many of whom are functioning well and have been doing that for many years.

Some of the feedback I'm aware of as well is that this legislation is based in part on B.C.'s Professional Governance Act, which was passed in 2018, but that act does not contain some of the things that are in this act. It does not contain the same sweeping powers that this legislation gives the minister, so why does the Minister of Labour and Immigration need that kind of sweeping power to give him oversight onto all aspects of Bill 23 when we know that groups like APEGA are functioning adequately at this point in time?

I think that we know that there are many changes that are going to be coming down the pipe for these PROs, and the minister talked a little bit about stakeholder engagement, but really there's not a lot in this, not a lot in the speech, and not a lot that I've been able to review. As well, I've been able to hear from some stakeholders, through other parties, where their engagement, their participation was minimal. The minister talked about meeting regularly, but when I was listening, it sounded like he met with some groups who wanted to become PROs and who wanted to benefit from the creation or be able to benefit from what's in this bill in terms of becoming a PRO in the future. I didn't hear a lot about the existing PROs that are identified, the 22 here, and what their view of this act is.

I think, Madam Speaker, that the number of nonprofessional PROs that are identified here and their functioning and what they think of this act should be reported on by the minister. We should hear what their feedback is, and we're starting to engage with those. The opposition hears from them, and I can tell you that they're still working through this legislation. As I said, it's very substantive in bulk, and it changes the way they work. There's a concern, of

course, that the ability of the minister to regulate the advocacy role of these organizations is changing as a result of this act, and I know from my own example that the College of Social Workers sees its role very strongly as advocates for improving the quality of life of Albertans and is not shy to take on bad legislation or bad policy that affects Albertans. I think that's what professionals should do. That's a concern that's been reported, that the advocacy role of these associations is being limited or changed or neutered as a result of this act.

**10:20**

Another bit of feedback – and I think I shared this already – is that consultation was very limited in structure, lacked reasonable timelines, and indicated a predetermined outcome, which always is a concern if you're going into a meeting with stakeholders with the answer you want to achieve as opposed to a true negotiation. Madam Speaker, the lack of transparency in going into those kinds of discussions is evident, you know, if you only look for one answer.

Those are some of the concerns. I think the primary ones are that this legislation leaves too much to regulations and schedules, which haven't been put before us. The timelines to achieve that are, like, less than seven months in the future, eight months in the future. If you've got 22 organizations, a convoluted bill, and you're expecting royal assent and everyone to line up, then you should be doing a lot more work to make that happen. What I heard from the minister is that some engagement went on with stakeholders, and I think there needs to be a lot more.

I don't think this bill should pass, Madam Speaker. The government should immediately take it back and work with each and every stakeholder who's going to be impacted before considering passing this in the Assembly. I think there's more work to do. As I said, just on a quick review and some of the stakeholder feedback there is too much prescription in this. The minister has too much power over each of these PROs and can change things without reasonable engagement with them. I don't think that's the kind of stakeholder outreach that we want, that I want. I want to see the minister talk about how he would behave going forward, how the act would enable the government to work together with these PROs.

PROs, as in APEGA's case – that one has been around for a long time, doing incredible work, and has a sophisticated way of engaging its members, its new members, people who want to become members. Certainly, there has been some feedback from those wishing to be engineers in this province that it hasn't happened fast enough for them. I think the way to improve that is to incentivize the PRO to find better ways to ensure that the skill sets of those applying to become registered members so that they can work in this province are assessed, given transitional support to make the grade if they're not there, and to have additional resources put into a place, like APEGA, where members are tasked with streamlining their process and the bar is held high for them. I'm not sure Bill 23 does that in ways that can find a co-operative relationship, a we-found-this-way-together approach.

The number of things that I've pointed out – and I think some of my colleagues will continue to talk on this bill. The bill itself seems really prescriptive. PROs can't even begin to do the necessary work to meet the regulations, which, you know, we're being told will take months to come together before they can begin looking at them to make sure that they're addressing those regulations. That's a problem, Madam Speaker.

I think that with those kinds of comments to start things off, I'll sit down and listen to the rest of the debate around the Professional Governance Act. I just know that from what I've heard, what I've

seen in the act so far, I think I'm supportive of improving professional regulatory organizations, but I'm not sure that this bill does it in ways that will be beneficial for PROs. I think it goes beyond what's necessary, and I think that the minister's power to determine the scope and the bylaws and even the existence of PROs is a step too far.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to rise this morning to provide some initial comments here to Bill 23, Professional Governance Act. You know, I guess I can appreciate the minister getting up and kicking off debate about how he feels about what the bill is going to do and how great it is, but quite frankly this seems like a problem that is just looking for a place to happen.

This bill causes me great concern, especially around the scope that the minister is providing for himself around this bill. As I've said before, you know, members of the government bench, members of the government caucus that served in the 29th Legislature: whenever they saw any kind of extra abilities that were being given to a minister, let's just say that the comments were very serious, very pointed, and came in a flurry. When you see the ability for the minister to determine the scope, the bylaws, and, quite frankly, even their existence, I can just imagine what those members would have said back then. My guess is that the debate would have been very robust, very heated, yet I suspect that we'll probably see those same members simply sit here and say nothing with regard to Bill 23.

When you're looking at that and what the minister is basically going to be able to prescribe – I think it was my friend from Calgary-Buffalo who had said, you know, that you have professional organizations, and I think again my friend from Calgary-Buffalo mentioned one there with APEGA. This is an organization of individuals, very highly skilled, very highly educated, who carry an immense responsibility in terms of what they do, as he said, designing the very buildings that we work in each and every day. I'm curious what the minister feels that he can come in and do better. I can sit here and challenge him in this House about three simple words – “may,” “will,” and “shall” – and our disagreement on those, yet he's going to try to prescribe to these individuals how they should govern themselves.

Now, I would never, of course, ever say that we don't want to be transparent, providing accountability, being consistent in your actions. You know, if that is indeed the case, well, maybe I would suggest to the minister that he suggests to the rest of the government that they try that a little bit more in terms of consistency, transparency, and accountability. It feels like Bill 23 has been rushed for some reason, needing to get something out the door to be able to talk about in this House. I've seen several bills now that are coming out and trying to change things.

**10:30**

You know, maybe there's been some – and I'm using the term “consultation” loosely here. Instead of, rather, consul-tate, it's probably consul-told, and then, “Well, we're going to do it in regulations,” again, something members of the government bench and members of the government caucus that served previously would have significant problems with in that case. That's what we have here.

I mean, we've just recently seen a change with regard, for instance, to insulin pumps. You know, making the changes, but

nobody seems to understand what's going on. That is of great concern to people, myself personally as my daughter is a type 1 diabetic. She is furious about this change. This is the pattern that we're seeing with the government in terms of legislation. Same with Bill 23: "Well, we'll figure out all the details later," and then give virtually no time to adapt. My friend from Calgary-Buffalo was talking about: what kind of timelines are we going to allow these organizations to adjust? Are they going to be reasonable, or is it just going to simply be an after fact and "Well, you're on your own to figure it out"? For a government that really doesn't want to be involved in things, you're getting involved in a lot of things, a significant number of things.

You know, the changes here around the timelines and approving applications for registration are now going to propose three different timelines that they're going to have to try to adhere to. That, by definition, is red tape. You just increased the difficulty to be able to do these things. So I'd be curious as to maybe some comments from the red tape minister on that particular part of the bill. Or did the Minister of Labour and Immigration even consult with the red tape ministry? I would certainly hope so because the red tape ministry is costing taxpayers anywhere between \$10 million and \$15 million over the course of this term. I would hope that they're a resource to all of the ministries when they're creating red tape. This would be a significant one just by itself.

I guess you could almost say, you know, that there's the chance for some very unpleasant, unintended consequences. I remember that word a lot. We used to hear it a lot, the unintended consequences. With the list of these professional organizations that are available to us that are being affected, I'm curious: did any of them say, "Yes; please create more barriers in terms of the timelines for these application approvals"? I'd be curious to know if any organization actually said: "Yes. We want more hurdles. We want more red tape there." But, like I said, I suspect it was more consult-tate rather than consul-tate around this.

As my friend from Calgary-Buffalo had said, this bill significantly needs some work to it. It seems very haphazard in some of the things. You know, perhaps maybe even pressing the pause button to give a chance for any of these organizations to weigh in on some of these proposed changes like, for instance, what I just mentioned around red tape and the application process. I think that the minister should be forthcoming with those discussions. There seems to be a habit of the government wanting to form all kinds of panels and create reports and whatnot. Well, why don't we get a quick report on this from these organizations about how they feel this legislation looks?

This is a significant piece of legislation. You know, I can remember members opposite – whenever a bill got bigger than 50 pages, there was concern about being able to go out and find out from stakeholders about how they felt around things. As you can imagine, Bill 23 is significantly larger than that. Maybe we should find out. Maybe we should take that time to be able to get the input from these organizations.

I guess the next aspect I'm looking at – when I look at the scopes of some of these different professional organizations, having them essentially under one umbrella feels like you're just simply trying to mash a whole bunch of organizations together. I mean, we have everything from architects to agrologists, engineers, veterinary, chartered accountants, electrical contractors, yet you're going to come in and start prescribing to all these organizations potentially what their bylaws might be. I mean, they didn't reach becoming professional organizations in terms of self-governing just by accident. They had to work towards that. They had to prove that they could indeed govern themselves with accountability, integrity,

transparency, and now, all of a sudden, we feel we have to smash all of these organizations together.

Again, I seem to remember that those same members serving before had a problem with things like one size fits all, yet here we are in Bill 23 doing that exact thing. It's always interesting. Again, as I've always said, Madam Speaker, when you start analyzing the language, what it says, what it doesn't say, what are you saying about it, what have you done in the past, persistently and consistently these things are always butting up against each other, much to the dismay of Albertans, because they are the ones caught in the middle and affected by these changes.

Again, it's a whole lot of: well, just trust us to get it right. I'm telling you right now that trust is in very, very thin supply with this government – very thin supply – and you just lost a whole bunch more trust with diabetics. I do believe I'm actually going to take a little bit of a personal insult to that because my daughter is type 1. There are maybe individuals that have private insurance that might be able to get to that; she's not one of them.

I guess – and, of course, I do realize that this is second reading, Madam Speaker. Hopefully, we'll get a chance to get more questions answered as we move along in debate and to Committee of the Whole. I'm hoping we'll see some answers around Bill 23. Why has the government chosen this direction? You know, why did we choose to increase red tape around these timelines for applications? How does the bill allow for the minister to prescribe how each organization can register? What got to that point?

You know, let's hear what was heard around the consultations – again using that term a little bit loosely here. I guess the big one: if you are indeed just going to pass this through – and I'd never presuppose the decision of the House, but that's likely what's going to happen – what kind of supports are you planning to put in place to help these organizations make this transition? Again, are you just going to leave them out in the wind, or are you actually going to back them up with these changes?

**10:40**

Now, past habits would show me that that's probably the case; they'll be left to their own devices, as we've seen with so many different changes brought in over the course of this government's term. Then maybe when there's a significant enough blowback, they start to make some changes. I mean, you've been promising help to Albertans for months around rebates. Still waiting. Is that the same kind of thing we're going to get out of Bill 23 should the minister decide to create a whole bunch of upheaval? Are we going to be able to go to these organizations like, for instance, the Society of Professional Biologists and say, "There's help available for you"? You know, are you going to give reasonable timelines if you're going to ask them to rewrite their bylaws because of the changes from Bill 23? Are you going to give them the proper amount of time that they require to effectively change these things?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 23 in second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise this morning to speak to Bill 23, Professional Governance Act. I believe I could think of a number of different titles to the act and perhaps submit them for tentative amendments. One that comes to mind, after reading the act in a cursory way, is that it's the Minister-Knows-Best Control Act. It certainly smacks of a heavy-handed piece of legislation that seeks to exercise a significant amount of control and shows in a very dramatic way why not only individual Albertans can't trust this government to govern in their interest, but now the crosshairs are focused



completely and very resolutely on the business community with this piece of legislation.

Business, looking at this legislation, can't trust this UCP government to look after their interests, because they are certainly not doing so with this piece of legislation. This is a three-alarm fire as far as I'm concerned, and the business community will be rallying, I think, against it, because I don't remember, Madam Speaker, reading any headlines saying: professional regulated organizations demand the minister take control of their organizations with an umbrella act such as this. There was no such headline and no such demand. There were organizations that acted independently under rules and guidelines that already exist in legislation, and I don't recall hearing any groundswell demanding that the government undertake a sweeping change to basically overtake the governance of many of these organizations which have been around for decades and decades in this province, which represent thousands and thousands of independent businesses who are now being told by the government that they don't have legitimacy to operate their own organization.

Some of my comments are based on the Field Law assessment of Bill 23 that really shows it to be a massive change in governance of some incredible organizations in this province that have been instrumental in building this province, yet the government seems to believe that they need to intervene on their own in order to have complete control over these organizations.

Now, it's stunning, Madam Speaker, to see the control that the government wants to exercise over these organizations, and I'm not speaking about fly-by-night organizations. The 22 professional regulated organizations that they seek to limit are well-known organizations that most Albertans would recognize: the professional engineers, professional accountants of Alberta, Consulting Engineers of Alberta, Alberta Institute of Agrolologists, Land Surveyors' Association, Professional Planners Institute; you know, these individuals who are continuously in trouble and flaunting the law. Well, no, they're not, actually. You don't see those headlines because, indeed, they have been operating with integrity for decades in this province, yet somehow the government sees the need to add them to the targeted list of people that they want to control in this province. Now, you know, businesses are squarely in the crosshairs of this government, and businesses looking at this are going to say: we can't trust these guys; look what they're doing. [interjection] I'll accept the intervention.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-McClung for accepting my intervention. I know he was just getting started there, and he's got a lot more to say on this bill. What piqued my interest were his comments that he was starting to say about trust. I'm seeing – and I think he is as well – a clear pattern of a lack of trust with this government. We've said that honestly, I think. What are we on? Bill 23, and it's been a theme with at least, I would say, 21 of the bills that we've seen in front of us.

You know, I would ask that member to just talk a little bit more about some of the concerns that he sees around trusting this government. We've seen multiple times the justification from this government. They say, "Oh, you know, just trust us that the kinks in this bill will be worked out in regulations" or "Just trust us that we've gotten the consultation right; just trust us that this is what stakeholders want."

Thank you.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for bringing up the question of trust as a matter of grave concern with this piece of legislation. Basically, what the government is doing, in a way that

wasn't solicited by the business community – that's for sure – is telling them: "We don't trust you. We don't trust you to operate yourselves with integrity, and therefore we're going to create a piece of legislation, Bill 23, which is going to provide us with the ability to have the minister, never mind the cabinet but to have the minister, dictate to you how you operate your businesses and your professional organizations, and if we don't like you, we're going to put the screws to you. We've got the tools in this legislation to actually discontinue your existence." That's how draconian this is.

I can only imagine, Madam Speaker, what the groundswell will be from businesses who feel they can no longer trust this government themselves, like Albertans across the province who don't trust this government as far as managing the pandemic and treating health care professionals, tearing up contracts with doctors, looking after the vagaries of inflation. The list goes on and on, and now the government aims directly at professional organizations, telling them that they are now the target and that they will be ruled by the minister, basically. That's the ulterior motive here, and it seems to be the ultimate goal.

The recourse in the event of a dispute with the professional regulatory organizations is simply to go to the Court of Queen's Bench. Well, that's a pretty difficult process to undertake if indeed you feel you have a minister trying to dictate how you're operating, and now the only recourse you've got is the Court of Queen's Bench.

The government, the minister can direct the professional regulatory organization under Bill 23 to adopt specific rules or specified rules of professional conduct, codes of ethics, or standards of practices or amend any of these, as if the organizations didn't have those elements to their governance right now. It can make, amend, or repeal any bylaws. It can carry out any power, duty, or function in the act or the regulations to be done in a specific manner. If they don't comply, the minister may actually override them and require that they be implemented.

Now, what business operator in any of the fields, whether you're an engineer, you're an accountant, you're an electrical contractor, whether you're a certified management consultant, whether you're a local government manager of Alberta, whether you're involved in the Supply Chain Management Association of Alberta or any of the businesses that operate under those professional categories – and there are thousands of them. What indeed are you thinking as a business operator or business owner when you read this legislation, seeing the government basically reaching its arms into the doors of your business and telling you how indeed you're going to operate? This is shocking. [interjection] I'll accept the intervention.

10:50

**Member Irwin:** Thank you again to the Member for Edmonton-McClung for being so accepting of my interventions this morning. I just feel very much like I need to stick my nose into this piece of legislation. You know, it's interesting. What I hear from his remarks, too, is that it's just – for a government that speaks a big game about reducing red tape and reducing barriers for business and organizations, they seem to be adding a whole lot of additional burdens, and that's concerning to me.

I think, you know, an example that my colleague from Edmonton-Decore shared earlier was around the issue of insulin pumps, and I know, clearly, that's not directly related to this bill, but what a clear, relevant example of this government adding barriers to folks at a time when they should be reducing them, when they should be supporting Albertans. That's an issue that I need to raise because we are hearing from thousands of Albertans on that one.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you for that intervention, Member. I certainly see a number of barriers that are being added to the operation of professional organizations that the minister will now control. The barriers include allowing the minister to actually limit the advocacy role of the PRO, the professional regulatory organization.

Now, does this sound familiar to anybody in this province, Madam Speaker? I'm sure it should because it follows a theme of the government not liking any opposition in any form whatsoever to anything that it decides it wants to do. A good example of it was seen recently with the number of private members' bills that the government refused to even let out of committee and be debated in this House simply because they were opposition members' bills.

That's the type of control that this government wishes to exercise over private businesses by passing Bill 23 in this House and giving itself the ability through the minister – through the minister only – without recourse except to the Court of Queens' Bench, to actually dictate how a business will operate through the governance regulations that this minister will now have total authority over. It's a quick process that should be shocking to every professional organization that will be governed under this act and others who might seek it. If you are a self-regulated organization looking perhaps to become a PRO in your future, you might have second thoughts, Madam Speaker, about doing that because of the amount of draconian control over your business that this piece of legislation is blatantly looking to exercise.

Now, some of these things used to happen behind closed doors, Madam Speaker, in the past under Conservative governments in this province. I've been here all my life, and certainly the stories were pretty much open and public knowledge. Governments would have their way or step on whatever organization they wished to have change its practices by simply having conversations with them over coffee, breakfast, or – who knows? – maybe Jameson on the steps of some local establishment. Now what the UCP government is doing in this legislation is legitimizing that backroom process and enshrining it in legislation. It's indeed a brazen – not an attempt; it's a brazen, blatant means of establishing the past practices in legislation so that they have total control over the regulatory models that the professional regulated organizations have.

If I was a business operator in this province and if I was a member of these regulated professional institutions or organizations, I would be shocked to know that this bill will empower the minister to establish a regulatory model for each PRO through regulations. It also creates a professional governance officer to advise the minister on the choice of regulatory models. Now, the professional governance officers are not necessarily going to be operating in the interests of the organizations that are about to be regulated. There are existing PROs that are continued under the act until the regulations are made, quote, unquote, but the minister is going to be authorized to make regulations respecting regulatory models. As the Field Law review of this Bill 23 suggests, it gives the minister immense power over the regulation of the professions through regulations. They are also permitted to apply for a change of regulatory model, but it's subject to the discretion of the minister.

One of the most shocking things that I find in this piece of legislation – and it may be slipping past the public's sight, but I want to bring it to the public's attention – is the limitations that the government intends through the minister to be able to put on the advocacy roles of these professional organizations. If you are perhaps an engineer or you're involved in land surveying and you have something that you think is in the public interest to bring forward regarding amending the legislation or the practices of your particular business and how it operates for the safety or betterment of the public and you bring that forward and the government doesn't like it, this legislation, through the governance act changes that it

contemplates, will allow the minister to limit the amount of advocacy that you can bring forward on a particular issue.

Now, this is shocking because it indeed touches upon the fact that you can't trust this government in terms of your ability to exercise your free speech in this country, in terms of how it wants to perhaps maintain bubble zones around abortion clinics so that that will impede access to abortion in this province. Other things that one could contemplate are pretty scary, Madam Speaker, given this exemplary power of limiting advocacy. [interjection] I'll accept the intervention.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, very kind of the Member for Edmonton-McClung to accept my third and final intervention on this. I wasn't planning necessarily to jump up, but then he brought in the comments around abortion and bubble zones. Don't worry; I won't get on a long tangent about that, but it is . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** You only have 50 seconds.

**Member Irwin:** That's right. I only have 50 seconds. Gosh.

You know, it is interesting because what he was getting at is that in the case of Bill 23 really a lot of power is given to the minister, potentially what this same government would label as government overreach. They talk a big game about free speech and about the free market and so forth. The number of times we hear concerns about the federal government – if we drank every time we heard Justin Trudeau's name from that side, we'd be in trouble over here. It's intriguing that this same government continues to be quite hypocritical in their legislation.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Member, for that intervention. I'll be brief. I think I only have a few moments left. I wanted to build on those remarks by saying that, yes, indeed, in Alberta this government prides itself on being the bastion and protector of free enterprise, but what they are doing with this piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, is actually stifling the ability of business.

I was in business for 30 years before being elected to this House, as were many members of this opposition assembly. Therefore, I wanted to know why this government decided to stifle the adaptation ability of business, the innovation, the evolution and adaptability of legislation, throwing all that out the window because the UCP government knows best. Through their minister they're looking to stifle the creativity of businesses by creating a wall around their professional organizations, a wall of control that should be shocking every business owner, under the guise of this legislation and those that might even contemplate joining professional organizations.

In fact, the whole business community, particularly small businesses but large businesses also, is impacted by this legislation in a very large way. It is shocking to see the amount of control that this minister and government wants to have over businesses. I think that the business community should be standing up and saying: "What in the world is going on? What do you think you're trying to pull? We're not standing for it."

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## 11:00 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

**Bill 22**  
**Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's**  
**Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022**

**The Chair:** This is its first time being debated in Committee of the Whole. Are there members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was hoping that the minister might answer the questions that we'd asked at previous stages, but perhaps a little bit later in committee since we will have multiple times to pop up and ask them.

I would start by sort of reiterating one of the main questions I asked in second and would sincerely like to get a response on, and that's the fact that this bill, a very similar version of this bill, was brought forward in a previous sitting of this Legislature and died on the Order Paper. We've waited about six months, and now the government has brought it back. They added one more piece to it that I'm aware of. It seems like the Balancing Pool provisions were added to this bill, but other than that, the bill largely was already before this Chamber and being considered. While I think that generally I'm quite supportive of this bill, I would love to have some clarity from the government about why it is they didn't pass this bill when it was in this Chamber previously. What kind of feedback did they receive that caused them to let the bill die on the Order Paper and then wait six months before bringing it back?

To me, it would seem that defining energy storage is a significant step in the right direction, and I would have liked to have seen the government move quickly in doing that. Energy storage is something that I think many of us are much more aware of now than when I was a kid. We certainly didn't talk much about energy storage because everything was based on short-term, surge energy needs, primarily coal, and then a lot of people still had oil furnaces burning in their houses, too – right? – so they heated their homes with short-term, immediate energy sources. But now, when we look at our electricity grid, more and more of it is coming from other forms, including natural gas as well as renewables, and the opportunities that have surfaced for increased energy storage are significant.

We've seen many, many researchers dedicate their careers to creating better storage mechanisms for energy users here in North America but also around the world. When you look at some of the work that's being done internationally around poverty reduction, access to information, access to the Internet, and access to energy storage so that locally produced renewable energies can be accessed in the long term are two of the big things that poverty reduction is really focusing on in terms of foreign aid and work that's happening around the world.

Making sure that we actually define energy storage, especially when the need is growing so significantly around the world, that we define it and what it means here in the province of Alberta, I would think would be a priority for any sitting government. So why did the government fail to pass the legislation that did that in the previous sitting of this Legislature, six months ago? I definitely think that it is something that I support us moving forward on at some point. What was the reason for the delay? Sometimes governments get feedback after a bill has been introduced and take that into consideration, so if there was a reason for the delay, I think it would be really important for us to know so that we could assess if the reason for the delay has been addressed by the time the bill has been brought back to this place, now, for further consideration.

Another area, of course, is self-supply and export. We are proudly one of the biggest energy producers in the world, and making sure that we can address our own energy needs as well as

export needs is something that I think most Albertans would be supportive of. Again, what was the feedback gathered when this bill was originally introduced, about half a year ago, that required it to be delayed to this point, and has that feedback been addressed through this later version of the bill, which we are now considering as Bill 22, the Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022?

And then a third area is requiring distribution facility owners, DFOs, to prepare long-term distribution system plans, which will have to receive regulatory approval. So, again, as I recall, this is something that was in the previous iteration of this bill. What has changed between that bill – why did the government fail to pass it six months ago, and why is it coming forward now? What are the changes? I don't think that these are onerous questions to ask of the government that has brought this bill forward now twice in two different versions but failed to actually get it through the legislative process.

I would like to enthusiastically support this bill, and giving this information, this basic information, not just to members of this Assembly but to the public – because this is about to become a law, should this receive full support from the Assembly or even majority support from the Assembly. And when we are asked to pass a law that was already proposed six months ago, that the government didn't care enough to pass at that point in time, I think we should know why. I think we should know why they didn't bother to move this forward six months ago, when it was already on the Order Paper, when it was already up for consideration, when it had already received some level of engagement, and why is it in a better position to become the law today? Pretty simple questions.

Then, of course, the fourth main area in the bill is about dissolving the Balancing Pool. I won't get into lengthy debate on the merits for and against the Balancing Pool. The government certainly has the opportunity to make that decision and drive in that direction if they so choose. I wish that we were debating where we were at a number of years ago, more than 20 – I'm sure now probably more than 30 – when we moved to such a deregulated, market-based model, really, the most extreme model in North America. The only other one that sort of compares is Texas, and I think many of us remember what happened to energy needs last year, when so many people in Texas were without power for such a long period of time. That caused significant hardships on families and on economies. So I wish we had an opportunity to consider many of the decisions that were driven by other Conservative governments in the past, that have resulted in us being in the situation where we are today.

And I wish this government was really, actually doing something to focus on the main energy issue that comes forward to me every time I talk to people about what's on their mind, what are their biggest issues, and one of the number one issues that comes up here in Edmonton-Glenora, in Canmore, in Calgary, in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain: like, regularly people bring up affordability and affordability specifically as it relates to energy costs. We know that this government has sat by while energy prices, specifically electricity prices, power prices for ordinary families have gone up significantly. Many people have talked about hundreds of dollars each and every month being added to their power bills, and we know that this government has been hearing that feedback because they have at least in language talked about rebates, right? They've said that they're going to bring forward some energy rebates that were for January, February, and March. They said this to us in March.

They had us pass supplementary supply, a spending bill, to be able to pay for that money out of the last fiscal year, in March, because they were going to give people \$50 a month – not

significant but \$50 a month – for each of those three months that people were seeing hundreds of dollars in terms of increased costs on their power bills. So the government finally said, “Okay; we will bring forward some kind of a rebate,” asked us all to move this forward quickly in March. Here we are, the middle of May, and Alberta families are still waiting for that, what the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland referred to as a paltry rebate – not significant but something – and the government can’t even get it out the door.

When we’ve actually asked for clarification that it will be out the door by the end of May, still a full two and a half months after they originally brought up this idea for Albertans, they refused to pass that amendment and have moved this, kicked the can further down the road, making Alberta families wait months more before giving them any guarantee that they will actually get that paltry rebate into their household budgets. In the meantime Alberta families are paying hundreds of dollars more each and every month, and that time keeps adding up, and the pressure keeps growing.

#### 11:10

I really wish that this bill we’re considering today, Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta’s Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022 – I think it has many, many worthwhile pieces in it. I think that the government is really missing the big picture, though, which is how desperate Albertans are to see their government do anything to address affordability for them and their families. For a government that campaigned hard on one particular aspect of affordability in the last campaign, I think that a lot of Albertans expected to see significant savings for them and their families; instead, what we’ve seen over the last three years is that costs have gone up for pretty much everything, including the cost for electricity, significantly, under the present government’s leadership.

So when it comes to a government that will actually stand up for you and your family, for your individual bank accounts, for the energy needs that you have, I think we’ve seen time and time again that you can’t count on the UCP to stand up for you and your family. You can’t trust them to actually follow through on the things that they espouse during an election. They’ve ignored the problem of skyrocketing bills for months, and they keep failing Albertans in that regard, and we deserve to have the direct support for individual Albertans. Again, why did the minister take so long to bring this bill back, and why did this bill fail to be implemented in the last session?

I also want to take a few moments to talk about energy needs and what so many Albertans are doing in spite of their government. One of those pieces is that many are moving forward with harnessing wind and harnessing the sun to do whatever they can to both reduce their own personal emissions in terms of their household consumption but also to reduce their monthly bills, because most of the research shows that in somewhere between five and 10 years you can amortize the cost of solar module installation for a personal household. It definitely makes a big difference to the monthly bill, especially once you’ve hit that mark where you’ve paid off the upfront capital investment. That’s one of the reasons why, when the money for the price on carbon was actually staying in Alberta instead of all being sent to Ottawa, energy efficiency as well as initiatives around reducing the actual draw on the grid were priorities. They aren’t for the current government. I’m very well aware of that.

But we still have a federal rebate, and many municipalities are bringing forward their own rebates as well to try to off-set some of that upfront original capital pressure that’s put on so many families, when they’re already paying hundreds of dollars more on their power bills and they’re trying to find a way to get out from under

that pressure, and the province is failing to give them any sort of incentive to further reduce their household consumption.

Part of why people want to reduce their household consumption is because there are many ways that you can reduce your emissions for a financial benefit without having a negative impact on your quality of life, and this is certainly one of them. When you’re running your dishwasher and watching your TV, whether it’s being powered by natural gas or formerly by coal or by renewables, most people at the time they’re turning on their device just want to make sure that they can wash their dishes and watch TV. That’s what their driver is. And it doesn’t impact them in a negative quality-of-life way to know that that energy is coming from a variety of sources at the time of consumption. The biggest impact, of course, is when you look at your bill and you see how much your usage was that month.

One of the reasons why many governments, including – right now we’re in the city of Edmonton – the government of Canada, and many other provinces have moved forward on rebates is to help with that upfront cost at the very beginning of the capital install to create more opportunities for energy to be produced locally through renewables. What it also means is that there are more other forms of energy that can be saved for other markets or for other types of use outside of individual household consumption.

So why the government here still fails to see the benefits and actually do anything to address affordability for Alberta families – because obviously there are two ways that I’ve highlighted so far in my remarks as they relate to Bill 22 that the government could quite easily do to address affordability for consumers, for people who need energy, and we all need energy. One is, of course, to have an actual rebate plan that’s meaningful and that’s timely, and another would be to find more ways for people to address their own energy needs and reduce their bills over the short and long term. The government here has failed to do either of those things to actually address affordability for everyday families.

I do want to again say that I think the piece around defining storage is very good news, and I think it does relate primarily to forms of energy that are produced through renewables. Sometimes you’ll hear people who don’t like renewables saying: well, it’s not windy every day. That’s true, but we have some of the best wind of anywhere in the world, and many other countries have found ways to harness the wind on windy days and store that energy for use in future times when they need it.

Us actually defining storage for energy storage, I think, is an important step forward for us to be able to actually have full utilization of the natural resources that we are so fortunate to have, both renewable and nonrenewable. We have many exceptional forms of energy here in the province of Alberta, and making sure that we can harness it all, I think, is the wise thing to do, and I think that we all know how much people across the planet need energy to be able to function.

I know that I’ve read about people having – oh, shoot, I forget it. The term escapes me. But when their power bills are at risk of being shut off, there are sort of energy consumption limits put on somebody’s bill and put on their address so that you can only use a certain amount of energy per monthly billing cycle. We’ve heard from people who needed their energy for things like running their oxygen machines, and they couldn’t draw on the grid and have to run their oxygen machine and run their microwave or run, you know, their washing machine at the same time. That definitely doesn’t speak to the kind of dignity that I think we all aspire for every Albertan to have, the ability to have reliable, cost-effective energy that’s there when you need it.

I think that those are a couple of things I wish this bill would do to take it from where we are now to a better place, where we could

all even more enthusiastically support it. I think that it is important that we move this bill forward. Again, though, given that the minister is the same – it's not like we've seen a change around the cabinet table as it relates to this area of responsibility in the bill. So understanding the backstory about what happened between when this bill, in its previous form, was introduced and what happened when it was brought back I think would help us have a better understanding of what exactly is going on behind the curtain, so to speak, because there is a lot of concern from everyday Albertans that this government is so stuck in their own political drama that they are keeping the actual needs of ordinary Albertans as an afterthought.

And that's one of the ways it feels in this bill: it's an afterthought in terms of affordability. Nothing is really being done in this bill to address the biggest issue facing most Alberta families. The number of Alberta families who report being \$200 away from financial ruin is an embarrassment, and it is shameful that in a province as rich as ours we have so many families on the brink of bankruptcy. The fact that this bill does nothing to address affordability and has done nothing to answer the questions about why it was delayed for so long between prior readings, between prior sessions and now – certainly, a lot has gone on politically over the last six months.

We know that there are many people in the UCP, many sitting MLAs in the UCP, who are more focused on infighting and on who's in the position of power – and I'm sure for good reasons. I'm sure that they have been frustrated by the way the current Premier has been treating them and party members, specifically when I think about the kinds of messages that have leaked out over the last several months, where there is name-calling directed towards people within their own party, probably, it appears, people within the caucus. And when those types of messages make their way out, it's clear that the Premier and probably his cabinet and probably his MLAs are spending more energy focused on infighting and on how they're going to arrange the deck chairs on the *Titanic* than they are on the issues that matter most to Alberta families.

11:20

I would say that clearly this bill has missed the mark when it comes to addressing energy affordability, but the other pieces in it, again, I'm fine with and I think are probably going to move our system forward and therefore should probably be passed. In fact, they probably should have been passed six months ago, when the government first brought these ideas forward to this Assembly and then sat on the bill and waited for it to die on the Order Paper. So by failing to say why this bill is better than the previous bill, by failing to say why the government chose not to move forward on those first three really big pieces – again, defining energy storage, self-supply and export, and requiring distribution facility owners to prepare a long-term distribution system plan which will have to receive government approval... [Ms Hoffman's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others to join the debate on Bill 22? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am excited to talk about Bill 22 and electric power for Albertans. As Bill 22 seeks to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of electric power production for Alberta businesses and families, it is something that I hope that all of us in the Legislature can support.

Madam Chair, I need to express the truth that the NDP were a disaster for power in Alberta. The NDP accelerated – I am excited to let all Albertans know the truth. The NDP accelerated the

shutdown of coal power production prior – prior – to the end of the economic life of this infrastructure and...

**Mr. Dach:** It saved lives.

**Mr. Stephan:** Madam Chair, that dysfunctional thinking saddled Alberta taxpayers with having to pay over a billion dollars of compensation to producers. At the end of the day, whether they want to admit it or not, the NDP made things worse. They made power cost more, yet they attack our government. They say that we should do more.

We need to understand, whatever rebate is provided, who is going to actually pay for it. Who is paying for a rebate to Alberta power users? Madam Chair, Alberta taxpayers are paying for it. I want to ask the question: should Alberta taxpayers subsidize the utility cost for themselves? Is there another way? Let's pull back the curtain. How about this? How about getting Quebec taxpayers to pay for the power of Alberta residents? How would we feel about that? It sounds kind of crazy – doesn't it? – but that is exactly what they are doing to us.

I want to share the truth with all Albertans, and here it is. Quebec enjoys the lowest residential power rates in all of North America. How do they do that? Quebec Hydro is using their Crown corporation, Quebec Hydro, to get money from Alberta businesses and families. You see, Quebec Hydro sells their power to Quebec residents at under market, the lowest in all of North America. You know what? When the NDP were in power, they absolutely did nothing. They did absolutely nothing. They made things worse.

The Quebec government: by selling their power at under market to Quebec residents, what they do is that they actually decrease their fiscal capacity. Equalization is determined by looking at each individual province's fiscal capacity. So by selling their power at under market to Quebec residents, lowest in North America, they actually decrease their fiscal capacity. By decreasing their fiscal capacity, they get more equalization. Their principal source of equalization is Alberta businesses and families. We pay over \$10 billion every single year to Quebec indirectly. While we are saddled with high power rates, we are indirectly subsidizing Quebec residents with the lowest power rates in all of North America. Madam Chair, why aren't we confronting that? Why is it that Alberta taxpayers are having to not only pay for the power of Alberta residents but Quebec residents also?

Now, Madam Chair, how would we replicate that result? You know what we would have to do? We would have to provide power to Albertans through a Crown corporation at below market prices just like Quebec does with Quebec Hydro, and we would have to manufacture losses in this Crown corporation in a way that decreases Alberta's fiscal capacity in the billions, reducing our capacity to pay billions more in equalization to Quebec.

Now, a challenge with this strategy is that it could be undermined with amendments to an equalization formula to punish Alberta or frustrate attempts to stop having to subsidize Quebec. Madam Chair, with the Supreme Court of Canada saying that carbon taxes are okay, which the NDP love, by the way, the Trudeau-NDP axis government can simply adjust or come up with new, creative carbon taxes that are even more prejudicial to Alberta to attack Alberta businesses and families.

We need to remember, Madam Chair, that the Premier of Quebec says that one of his favourite things about Canada is equalization. Now, I want to ask the question to Albertans, to Canadians. If Quebec did not get to take from Canada, from Alberta, would they still be here? We know the truth; the answer is no. They would have left a long time ago. The only change to equalization that Quebec and Ottawa will support is a change that allows them to take even

more from Alberta businesses and families. They are ignoring the equalization result, and nothing is happening.

Madam Chair, do we think for a minute that as Quebec and Ottawa accelerate towards becoming fiscal basket cases, they will look at the economic success of Alberta and leave us alone? No. They will absolutely not. Why do I say this? Because we can look back and see what they have been doing for decades in varying degrees.

Now, this is a very serious matter, but I'm not saying this in anger. But there is no point in sticking one's head in the sand and pretending to ignore the reality of our circumstances, both the great blessings we have but also the threats from this NDP-Liberal axis. They are a clear and present danger to Albertans. How are we going to protect ourselves? How do we move towards having more self-reliance? Madam Chair, this is a very difficult situation, but one thing that we can do is – there is great safety in the truth. I love the truth. In the end, the truth always prevails notwithstanding lies and distortions, and numbers don't alter the truth. If a majority believes in a lie, truth is unaffected, and in the end it does prevail.

Madam Chair, as it relates to electric power, we need to let every Alberta ratepayer know the truth, that every year Albertans are paying billions of dollars to Quebec to subsidize the lowest power rates in North America as they are suffering under high power rates. The more Albertans know the truth, even if it challenges the status quo, the more Albertans will push Alberta government to do what is right. The more Albertans know the truth, the more accountable government will be. The more accountable government will be, the better they will be. We want government to have the best culture of government possible. The NDP were a failure. I'd love, as we strive to be better in every single way, to have a culture of excellence in government, and Bill 22 is moving in the right direction, but there's more to do.

Thank you.

11:30

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's nice to hear a mention of Bill 22 towards the end of the member's speech. That's how I kind of realized that the speech was about Bill 22. Although it's a good bill, many things that the government talks about with respect to the bill and the government member talked about with respect to the bill have nothing to do with facts, truth, or anything resembling that. [interjections] When I hear these talking points, two things come to mind.

**Mr. Getson:** To accelerate phasing out coal to save the environment, apparently, was ridiculous.

**Mr. Sabir:** Are you done with that?

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I think it's a good time to remind members to direct their comments through the chair. Also, only one member has the floor to speak.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, I was trying to make sure that the member was done with whatever he was trying to say.

When I hear government speaking notes and government talking points on this file and this bill, two things come to mind. One, either they are completely incompetent, or they are not truthful about this file. I think I will go back a little bit. When we talk about the rising cost of utilities, that Albertans are hurting, that they're looking for

relief, the government promised many times that Albertans will get a \$50 paltry rebate, but still they are waiting for it, and their utility bills are through the roof. Government members will get up and they will try to tell Albertans, tell this House that somehow from '15 to '19 there were transmission lines built which are the reason for these rising utility prices.

Back in 2008-2009 the then PC government gave cabinet powers to approve energy infrastructure without any public hearing. That's a matter of public record. That's what the previous government did. The two major lines that were built – like, they started building those lines back in 2009. The western Alberta transmission line, eastern Alberta transmission line: they were both approved in 2012, and 2012 is well before when we became government. That's when the PCs were building energy infrastructure, and yes, it was overbuilt. Back then NDP leader Brian Mason was opposed to it. He warned government then that this will result in higher energy prices and Albertans ultimately will pay for that. The government, so conveniently, ignores all of that and wants Albertans to believe that somehow transmission lines were built in '15 to '19.

One day even the minister suggested that our fault is that we didn't cancel those. Madam Chair, let me tell you that the contracts that we see government used to sign were always cheaper to honour than to cancel because they often had put clauses there that would socialize all kinds of losses onto Albertans, and profits would be taken by their insiders, by their close friends, and by big corporations. That's exactly how they have signed on to these contracts and overbuilding this energy transmission.

There is no truth to any of those assertions that the NDP were responsible for building transmission lines. It was all PCs, and government members should look into *Hansard*, government members should look into Alberta's legislative records instead of blindly standing up for this government. They should stand up for their constituents, and they should tell them that the number one reason for rising cost prices is the profits that companies are making. That's the number one reason. That's the people from, you know, the University of Calgary School of Public Policy, that came out last month and with facts and figures showed how over the last year or so companies are making the profit in excessive amounts, and that's the number one factor for the rising gas prices.

The second thing. Government will get up and tell us that our government shut down coal plants and that's the reason for the rising electricity prices. For everyone's information, Madam Chair, there was a regulation passed by the federal government – and the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche will know that; back then he was a member of the federal Parliament – and the name of the regulation was reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired generation of electricity regulation. That's a federal regulation, and the statutory order and regulation number is 2012-167. I strongly urge the members of government caucus to look up this regulation and look up what this regulation did to Alberta's electricity market or Alberta's coal-fired plants. At that time there were 18 plants in Alberta that were coal powered, and out of that 12 of them were scheduled to shut down through this regulation by December 31, 2029 . . .

**Mr. Getson:** You didn't accelerate any of the other ones?

**Mr. Sabir:** . . . twelve out of 18.

**Mr. Getson:** And you didn't have to pay out \$1.3 billion in contracts?

**Mr. Sabir:** Madam Chair, through you, if the member wants to talk, if he's allowed to talk, I am willing to cede the floor to him, but I'm sure he's not allowed to talk.

Anyway, 12 out of 18 plants were shut down under the Harper government, and that was in 2012. The workers who were in these plants didn't get any support whatsoever. These business owners didn't get any support whatsoever from the federal Conservative government. These are 12 out of 18 plants.

The remaining six plants were TransAlta, ATCO, and Capital Power. When we accelerated their transition, we negotiated with them, and their plants were converted to gas so that Albertans would have a reliable supply of electricity from a relatively cleaner source using Alberta's natural gas. With that, we also provided \$40 million to Albertans whose livelihoods were impacted so that they can get the training, so that they can get the skills upgrade and transition into new jobs while the federal government just shut down 12 of the 18 with the dint of law without giving a penny to Albertans, without any regard for the jobs of those who were in those plants.

**11:40**

Then, yes, we also worked with them. Oftentimes the government talks about \$1.36 billion. That was money committed over 14 years so that those plants can transition to gas plants and Albertans can have a reliable source of energy. I think I would argue, and Albertans will agree, that that investment was better than spending \$1.3 billion on a pipeline to nowhere; \$1.3 billion on Keystone XL that didn't go anywhere. It was literally a bet on Donald Trump winning the U.S. election.

**Mr. Stephan:** They fired you.

**Mr. Getson:** And they honoured foreign policy, national security.

**Mr. Sabir:** They wasted that \$1.3 billion, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Getson:** Look at what's happening with Ukraine.

**Mr. Sabir:** If they want to speak to that waste or any other waste, they certainly could, Madam Chair, through you. But they don't want to listen to facts. They don't want to listen to truth.

These are the facts, what the PC government did from 2009 to 2014. That's part of *Hansard*. That's part of Alberta's legislative history, what the Stephen Harper government did. I think that if they are on talking terms, they could ask the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche that that was done when federal Conservatives were in government; 12 out of 18 plants were shut down back then.

So against this backdrop, when I hear government assertions that somehow from '15 to '19 we built transmission lines, we did everything wrong, and that's how prices are up, electricity prices: that's not true. If this government believes that to be true, then this government cannot be trusted and they are incompetent. If this government knows this history and is still not telling Albertans the whole story, then they are not up front with Albertans about the facts.

At any rate, they will blame anyone and everyone for their failures, for their mistakes, for their lack of leadership because that's what we have heard from this government from day one. Anything that happens here – if they are caught drinking liquor in the sky palace, it's somebody's fault because somebody took a picture, not their fault. They were not supposed to get caught. It's not their fault. Somebody should not have taken the picture without their consent, without letting them know. That's their fault.

**Mr. Nally:** Let's talk about Bill 22.

**Mr. Sabir:** Anyway, Bill 22 still is a good piece of legislation. It defines energy storage. It will help us capture energy at one point

and let us store it for use at another. This is important for a couple of reasons. One, it will make sure that Albertans have a reliable source and supply of energy. So that's a really good thing about it.

The second thing is that it will also help us address the environment, that this government doesn't care much – sometimes even they don't believe in climate change, but the fact is that this energy storage can help us address climate change as well. We do know that most people do believe in climate change. They think that as humans, as legislators we need to take climate change seriously. We need to take action on addressing climate change. I think that by creating room for energy storage, by creating a legal framework for energy storage, that will help us create efficiencies for the grid. It will help us reduce GHG emissions by introducing more flexibility and by integrating energy to a storage system from more environment-friendly sources such as solar, such as renewables, such as wind. I think that's a good step, and it will help Albertans in the long run, and I recognize that it's a good thing that government did.

Another thing. While the Member for Red Deer-South was speaking – when he was speaking, he was talking about Quebec Hydro and some other provincially owned corporations. Before I became elected, I was working on a file that had something to do with another Crown corporation, Manitoba Hydro, and I was doing some due diligence for some First Nation on a file. I started looking at Manitoba Hydro's record. They were not only providing the cheapest electricity at that point in Canada; they were also providing technical assistance to 55 countries across the world. Not only were they providing electricity, the cheapest electricity, to the people of Manitoba; they were exporting that electricity, and they were also providing technical assistance to 55 countries: how to generate electricity, how to, I guess, export electricity, and how to deal with electricity markets. [interjections] That's the capacity of one Crown corporation that I know of. I think that they pick and choose whatever suits their arguments. They will bring that forward and ignore everything else; it doesn't matter how relevant, how factual.

Anyway, in closing, I think that energy storage is a good step. It will help us reduce our GHG emissions. It's good for the environment. It's good for Albertans. Also, requiring distribution facility owners to do long-term planning will, again, go against the ideological belief of this government that they don't want to intervene in markets or don't want to require anyone to plan ahead because the market does everything on its own. But this provision in this act will require market actors, distribution facility owners to prepare long-term distribution system plans. Madam Chair, there is a chance that they might prepare plans which are not good, so an additional safeguard is that they will need regulatory approval from the government so that the government will make sure that the plans they prepared are good and they are in the best interests of Albertans, the best interests of our grid. The government is now intervening in the market to make sure that distribution system owners have the plans in place with respect to their business.

Lastly, I would say that the government also had one piece of legislation, a similar piece of legislation, six months ago. The government didn't pass that piece of legislation. I think it will be important to know: from that time on, what has changed? Had government received any feedback? Had government consulted with anyone in the industry? Their record on consultation is really, really poor as well. They think they know the best, and they don't bother themselves with any kind of consultation, so it will be important to know what has changed since they dropped the last piece of legislation. What's new in this one in terms of consultations with the stakeholders?

I think that with that, I will take a seat, and I would also urge the government that whenever they are talking about Bill 22, they should talk about Bill 22.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

11:50

**The Chair:** Are there are others? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This has been a very, very nice conversation in here this morning. I just wanted to thank the minister for this bill and for looking at this, in particular the Balancing Pool. We all know some of the concerns that we've had in the past, and I think that, you know, when you have the privilege of being in government and you're working with such a diverse group of people, especially folks from all ends of the spectrum of – and electricity is confusing even when you understand it. It's very, very complex. It's difficult. There are a lot of different organizations and, actually, a lot of personalities at the table, too.

Again, I want to thank the minister for being able to co-ordinate and collaborate with so many of these organizations, because I think all of us have struggled from time to time in this place in trying to understand what's in the best interest not only of this sector, but in particular I think every one of us right now in this place is receiving bazillions of e-mails of the difficulties that people are having, how hard it is. You know, there is so much going on. We are looking at inflation. We're looking at increased rates for electricity. We're looking at how it is that we can support people who are vulnerable.

So many things that are on the personal side, but then also when we look at the grid, the important thing for me in this legislation is really exposing and having some transparency around the Balancing Pool. As we bring that together – and again thank you so much to the minister for the opportunity. I'm not quite – you know, there'll be always things in electricity that have to be tweaked and fixed. When you take a look at your own legislation and you realize that it's not working exactly right and you're willing to come back to the drawing board and look at that and fix it, that takes a lot of guts, and it takes a real, good consultation with the folks that you're dealing with. Thank you so much, Minister, for doing that.

It's so hard to predict what's going to happen. There is so much that goes into the discussions around this, but one of the things I wanted to say – and I just want to touch on this for a bit – is that the ability to debate it here is one of the most important things that we can do. Every single one of us is coming from a very different position, whether we're rural MLAs, we're city MLAs, about the impacts that this is having on our constituents. When you have more generators that are able to apply and supply into the grid and are contributing, the hope is, and particularly in being able to put it with AESO versus the Balancing Pool, to have a more stable structure. I think that, at the end of the day, if that's what we're able to accomplish through this legislation and other pieces of legislation going forward, it's a really, really good step in the right direction.

Again, I think that, you know, we're looking at – if I'm understanding it correctly, like, we have a lot of large producers that

are already enabled to be able to participate, and this is very enabling legislation, the process being that the more the market is able to be a market and bring people into the market, the more stable the prices will be for the people of Alberta. I really look forward to seeing how this bill will engage not only with the stakeholders but with the people of Alberta, and I just want to take a minute to thank the minister for bringing the bill forward.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there others? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 22, Electricity Statutes (Modernizing Alberta's Electricity Grid) Amendment Act, 2022. Just before I address a couple of things that were said, let me just say that I agree. This is my first time speaking to this bill, so just to put on the record that I do believe that there are a lot of positives in this bill that have the potential to help modernize Alberta's electricity grid, which is a good thing, and if implemented well, these certainly will have a positive long-term impact.

Now, the associate minister is – you know, hopefully, he'll answer the question. I know that two of my colleagues have, before me, asked the same question, and I think it would be great to hear an answer from him. Those were: why did it take the minister so long to bring back the legislation – I'm sure there's a good reason; perhaps it was around consultation – and why did the minister abandon the bill last session and now bring back a similar bill? Just to shed some light on that would be super helpful. If he would jump up and explain that or answer that question, that would be great. I'm guessing that's going to be a big no.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) we will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Rosin:** Madam Speaker, Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 22.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is carried. Looking for the hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity to perhaps move an adjournment.

**Mr. Nally:** You want to break for lunch?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Mr. Nally:** I didn't realize. Yeah, thank you, Madam Speaker. Should really wake me up earlier next time.

I make a motion that we break for lunch – no; adjourn.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]







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