



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 25e

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Second Session

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Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)  
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)  
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

### Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 58      Wildrose: 17      Alberta Liberal: 5      New Democrat: 4      Independent: 3

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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Amery

Deputy Chair: Mr. Fox

Dorward	Pastoor
Eggen	Quadri
Hehr	Rogers
Kubinec	Rowe
Lemke	Sarich
Luan	Stier
McDonald	

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Casey

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Amery	Khan
Barnes	Sandhu
Dorward	Sherman
Eggen	

### Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Rogers

Deputy Chair: Mr. Quadri

Blakeman	Leskiw
Eggen	McDonald
Goudreau	Saskiw
Lemke	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Olesen

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

Cusanelli	McAllister
DeLong	Notley
Fenske	Pedersen
Fritz	Sandhu
Jablonski	Swann
Jeneroux	VanderBurg
Leskiw	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Jeneroux

Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

Bikman	Leskiw
Blakeman	Quadri
Brown	Wilson
DeLong	Young
Eggen	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky

Deputy Chair: Mr. VanderBurg

Casey	Mason
Forsyth	McDonald
Fritz	Sherman
Johnson, L.	Towle
Kubinec	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Mr. Xiao

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Leskiw

Allen	Notley
Brown	Olesen
Cusanelli	Rowe
DeLong	Stier
Fenske	Strankman
Fritz	Swann
Jablonski	

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

Chair: Ms Kubinec

Deputy Chair: Mr. Rogers

Calahasen	Pastoor
Casey	Pedersen
Kang	Saskiw
Khan	VanderBurg
Luan	Wilson
Notley	Young
Olesen	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Anderson

Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

Allen	Khan
Amery	Luan
Barnes	Pastoor
Bilous	Sandhu
Donovan	Sarich
Fenske	Young
Hehr	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Khan

Deputy Chair: Mr. Anglin

Allen	Goudreau
Bikman	Hale
Bilous	Johnson, L.
Blakeman	Webber
Brown	Xiao
Calahasen	Young
Casey	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 5, 2014

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 9

#### Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014

Ms Notley moved that the motion for second reading be amended to read that Bill 9, Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014, be not now read a second time but that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

[Adjourned debate April 23: Mr. Horner]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my colleagues. You know, there's been a good deal of discussion around referrals, et cetera, on this bill. There's also been a good deal of discussion that I've had with members on both sides of the table in terms of the pension boards. I think that when we are done with this referral – and I would urge members both opposite and on our side to actually vote this referral down in second reading and that we would move the bill through second reading so that we can deal with possibly other referral motions that may be coming forward after second reading – it's important that hon. members understand that there is an intention to work towards there, the concept that we have in terms of Bill 9.

I think that I ended my speech on this referral motion last by saying that we're doing the right thing. I still very firmly believe that, Mr. Speaker. I still very firmly believe that there is an agenda that we have set for public-sector pension sustainability, and I look forward to us working towards that throughout the summer and into the fall.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, Minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a pleasant change of heart. The tone has shifted somewhat from the last time that we were here talking about Bill 9, hasn't it?

**An Hon. Member:** Spring has sprung.

**Mr. Wilson:** Oh, it's spring. Is that what it is? Yes. It must be that fresh air, the beautiful weather that we've been having in Alberta that's changed the hearts and minds of those on the other side, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it's funny. I originally made these speaking notes at the time that this amendment was tabled, and my intent at that point in time was to support it. I appreciate the Minister of Finance suggesting that we will be moving this in Committee of the Whole. I believe that that is a positive step. Better late than never. It does allow the committees to do the work that they were originally intended for: to analyze a bill, to bring the public in, to have all parties engage in the debate around something so important as a bill like this, that has an impact on roughly 300,000 Albertans. It's incredibly important to them and should be to all Albertans. At the end of the day public-sector unions, public-

sector employees, front-line workers across this province impact every single one of us with the work that they do, and we need to be mindful of that.

Now, I know that there have been a number of well-organized groups such as the AUMA and AAMD and C who have come out against this, and I hope that they are invited to partake in that committee process later on when it does happen – I'm assuming over this summer – and then this bill can come back, ideally in the fall, and we can have another fulsome debate here in this House as to what the committee finds.

You know, another positive to having this go to committee is that I believe it allows the . . .

**Mr. Donovan:** Relevance?

**Mr. Wilson:** It's going to be one of those nights, Mr. Speaker.

It allows the leadership that is impending in this province to play out and to have whomever becomes the next Premier of this province to also put their stamp on this as opposed to having it be something that they will be dealing with over the summer and possibly distracting from the important job of finding a new leader for this Progressive Conservative Party.

I also made notes a couple of weeks ago that the former associate minister suggested that consultations were done, and he did that in a very passionate way, which, as I have alluded to before in this House, is often the way in which he speaks. Unfortunately, it seems as though they weren't done well enough because Mayor Nenshi has suggested that he believes that the Ministry of Finance perhaps even misled the city of Calgary as to the intent of Bill 9.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, I will succumb to the Minister of Finance's suggestion that we do not support this specific amendment, and I will trust that there will be an amendment forthcoming in Committee of the Whole to send that to the appropriate committee to be studied further.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first day back, and I didn't know what I was doing, but I think I know maybe a little bit now about what I'm going to do. On Bill 9 I had lots of feedback, lots of e-mails, and I was going to, you know, read them all out and bring all the points. There's lots of opposition on Bill 9, and I'm glad that an agreement has been reached to send it down to the policy field committee for further study. We look forward to having all the consultation processes done properly so all the stakeholders have their say in it. This will save the government the humiliation of going back to the courts and all that. So we will do it right – probably this will be the first time we do it right – and I hope in the fall session we will be able to deal with it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other speakers on the amendment?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Seeing none, we'll call the question on the amendment. For the record RA1, I believe, is the amendment we're dealing with. I'll call the question on the vote on amendment RA1.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 9 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** So we're now back to debate on second reading of the bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Kang:** Okay. I move the following amendment under the name of my colleague, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. Dr. Swann, to move that the motion . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, just the name of the riding, please.

**Mr. Kang:** Sorry. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 9, Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 9, Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is a hoist amendment?

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes, it is.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay. We need to have the amendment to the table. I guess once I've got a signal from the table that this amendment is in order, then we'll resume debate.

Hon. members, we have before us amendment H1, and we will begin debate on amendment H1. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

7:40

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in second reading to the amendment for a hoist that has been proposed by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View and brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-McCall. This has been a really interesting process, not the least because it's involved so many people in Alberta. I think we've all had a good amount of feedback from individuals that are in line to receive a pension, those that are receiving a pension, those that don't receive a pension, and employers.

I'm glad that the government has been calm enough to allow enough time for that feedback to start to flow. Sometimes there's a haste that makes some waste in the House here, and things are pushed through too fast, and people don't get an opportunity to understand what's going on and to be able to comment on it. This recent amendment is asking for a hoist, which sends it into the parliamentary netherworld for a period of six months. The assumption is that six months from now we're not sitting, so it sort of disappears forever. In fact, I think we will be sitting, and it would be able to be brought back that way.

We've heard from the Provincial Treasurer just a few moments ago, who indicated that, in fact, he would be willing to entertain sending Bill 9 to a policy field committee for further examination, which would allow for a public hearing process, my particular concern. I thank the Provincial Treasurer for that, and I thank the Government House Leader for carrying the message forward. This is of such importance to people.

I think one of the things that I have heard most often is: we are trying to plan. Having a bill in front of us that changes things while the game is on – and I don't mean to trivialize what I'm talking about here, but everybody understands that you don't change the rules of the game once you're playing the game. That's what's happened here. It talks about changing COLA allowances, that they wouldn't be a set amount, that it would be some targeted amount, which may or may not be applied depending on how

much money was in the kitty. For people that are trying to plan ahead and figure out whether they can or should retire now, how much money they will need, do they need to go and take another job, do they need to work way past 65, do they need their spouse to work: it's hard to plan when that kind of uncertainty is now being put in front of you by the government about your public-sector pension plan, and in Bill 9 we are talking about public-sector pension plans.

We talked a little bit about poverty and poverty for people who are retired, poverty for seniors. One of my real concerns is that a very, very high percentage, a disproportionate percentage of people in poverty – and in this case I'll talk about seniors in poverty – are women. Eighty per cent of seniors living in poverty are women, and that to me is a really critical statistic. We already have an uneven track for women who are in the workforce. Taking time off to have children or raise children counts against them when you talk about pension earnings or pensionable earnings. They are more likely to be working in areas that are paying a wage, not a salary. They are more likely to be, as I said, with big gaps in their working career, so their Canada pension plan contributions would be less and earnings into a pension plan, a public-sector pension plan, would also be less.

So what did I see could be the outcome of a Bill 9? What I saw was more women in poverty. At one point we were talking about how the average pension was \$12,000, and this was met with great hoots of derision from my hon. colleagues opposite. I thought, well, you know, maybe I'm wrong. That happens occasionally, not often but occasionally. So I went out and started to look around and ask around, read the tables. Yeah, in fact, a lot of people get about \$12,000 as a pension, which isn't a lot of money. You know, it's a thousand bucks a month. Yes, at that low an income they're probably in for subsidized housing and maybe some other benefit programs, but is that really what we wanted to see for seniors in this province, for our public-sector workers, wanted to see them moving into retirement, their senior years, you know, looking forward to the food bank? I just don't think that's what anybody in this Legislative Assembly wanted to see.

I'm very glad that we're going to have an opportunity to send this to a policy field committee, and I really hope that the policy field committee takes it all seriously and spends the amount of time with it that needs to be taken so that all of the issues are understood. We've had a battle of statistics: your statistics versus my statistics. Mine say that we're not in such bad shape. Any deficit in the pension funds would be addressed within somewhere between nine and 12 years. That doesn't seem so bad. Other statistics that the government had said that we were in serious trouble and death defying and the sky is falling and all that kind of thing. So, you know, what are the real numbers? I'd like to know that and be able to dig a bit more with it.

The last point I want to raise here is that we are such an amazing province. We are such a wonderful place. We have so much opportunity here. It absolutely drives me wild when we are planning for things to get worse, and that's what Bill 9 does. We're planning for things to get worse, and we shouldn't be doing that in this province. We should be planning for things to get better, not to get worse.

When I look at the people that work in the public sector – and that's a very wide range of people, good people who come into public service to do that, to serve. You know, they want a reasonable wage, and with that came a reasonable pension. That was the deal. They got paid less all the way through their careers, but there was a pension and, as we know, not a grandiose pension.

Okay. We're considering taking that deal apart in Bill 9, and I think we have to be very cautious about that. But attached to that

is: how do we then attract and retain the bright young people that we need to help us develop the public service of tomorrow? How do we attract and keep some of the very intelligent young people that work for us as pages? How do we keep them in the public sector? There are a number of other people, that I'm going to call under 40, that are now working around us at the Legislative Assembly and that we're very fortunate to have working for us. How do we keep them? How do we say to them, "This is a great job, it's worth while staying here to do the kind of work you do, and, look, you're going to come out of this at least not behind as compared to what would happen if you went into the private sector?"

I'm very concerned. Aside from all of the other issues of people that are in that pension track today or that are already retired, I'm looking forward into the future and going: what's the deal we're going to have with the civil servants of tomorrow to be able to retain them in public service jobs if we're saying, "Well, the pension is a little iffy, and we don't pay you, you know, all that great in the public service compared to the private sector, so come on down and work for us?" When there is such a world of opportunity open in front of them, that's not much of an incentive to come and work for us in the public service.

7:50

These are the people that back us up. They make us look good every day. They work in the departments. They work in other public-sector areas like, you know, in the parks, in SRD, in ambulance services, firefighters, police officers, teachers, nurses, people in the medical professions that are helping us. It's a lot of people that are working that make us look good and make our society move forward.

I think it's really important, and I'm very glad that the House leaders have been able to negotiate and that it's been met with some favourable response. You know, as much as we like to get in here and roll our sleeves up and fight, or at least I do, and how loath I would be to give up that opportunity to spend a couple of all-nighters in here with all of you because I know that there are some rookies that haven't done that yet and would be so excited to do it with me, as much as fun as all that is, if we can achieve those things and be able to take a step back, look at both Bill 9 and Bill 10 with a much more critical eye and have the involvement of the people who are affected by these changes – I hope you are going to be coming out to talk to us about what you think. I'm sorry; I'm pointing at some of the people in the gallery that I would say are under 40 that are going to come and tell us in the public hearings how they think the changes anticipated in Bill 9 and Bill 10 would affect their interest in staying in the public service. I'm willing to give up my all-nighters. You know, as disappointed as I am, I'm willing to give that up if we can achieve that more reasoned, tempered look at it, particularly allowing the people that are actually affected by the pensions to speak.

I know that – and I'm going to use the wrong word here: the board of directors, the people that are in charge of the plans and are political appointees.

**An Hon. Member:** The boards.

**Ms Blakeman:** The boards. Okay.

I know they were asked what they thought about Bill 9, but that's not the same as asking the people that are directly affected by Bill 9, and I think it's really important to do that when you are talking about their financial future. In this day and age I think the concept of the Freedom 55 commercials – anybody remember those? – is a bit of a laugh. I don't know many people, particularly

in the public sector, that can afford to do that. I am much encouraged to believe that the government is going to be open to receiving information and new information and may be willing to change what they have and are bringing forward in Bill 9 and Bill 10.

You know, Bill 10 has sort of been the country cousin to Bill 9 here. I don't think that should be overlooked, and I certainly think that there's a great possibility that once pensions plans were affected by what was in Bill 9, they then would have been considered eligible under a number of the requirements under Bill 10 and would have been treated the same way. There a pension could be changed retroactively, which is tough. I know. I saw a few eyebrows going up here, going: "Really? Huh?" Yeah. So it's important that we look at both of those, not necessarily together but that we do have a look at both of them.

As I said, I'm really glad that I got a chance to speak. When I spoke before, I referenced the number of employees that work for our municipal governments and how much our cities would be affected, particularly our large cities, if a number of people decided: "Hey. Not much worth it. I don't gain anything by working any longer for the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Peace River, et cetera." I'm on my way and watching an exodus of 2,000 or 3,000 or more civic workers leaving those big centres, and these are the people that know how to do stuff. They know how it all works. They know that little trick. I'm going to use an engine analogy. You know, sometimes you go to start a two-cycle motor and it's just not happening for you, but you know that if you kind of work with the choke a little bit, it'll work for you. That's what we need.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I was going to ask the hon. member to elaborate on her experiences with cutting the lawn with two-stroke lawn mowers, but I didn't.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to come and speak to this amendment to Bill 9. The motion, of course, is a hoist: that the bill "be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time . . . six months hence." It would have the effect, I think, of killing the legislation. That is certainly the desired effect from my point of view.

Today in question period the hon. Premier challenged me to say whether I wanted to kill the bill or refer it to committee. My answer was that I would prefer to kill the bill but that failing that, I thought that we should give Albertans a chance to have input into the bill and that, hopefully, the government would withdraw the bill at some point. That's still my view, Mr. Speaker, so that's why I'm going to be voting in favour of this. I've set out clearly my reasons for opposing Bill 9, and I think that a few major points bear repeating.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, there was not adequate consultation, especially with the people who are enrolled in the pension, who will receive it or who are receiving it now. That's a critical point.

If, in fact, there were some issues with respect to these pension plans, then I think we need to recognize that not only the government has an interest in making sure that the plans are solid and viable and will provide a good retirement income. Other employers such as the city of Calgary, for example, have that interest as well, as do the employees who are enrolled in the plan,

the people receiving the pensions, the pension boards themselves, and the unions that represent the employees and negotiate on their behalf. All have an interest in making sure that these plans are viable and solid going forward, and therefore there's a good basis for negotiation, Mr. Speaker.

That's what I think needs to happen. I think that the government should not legislate until it has negotiated, and that hasn't happened. So I'm going to encourage members to support this and have the government go back and negotiate. Failing that, I accept that the government has made a commitment to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for public hearings. Provided that those hearings are open enough and that the opportunity for members to make motions is broad enough within the committee, I think that that is a second-best solution, and I appreciate that the government has taken that position.

Nevertheless, I do believe that this bill will transform the existing defined benefit pension into potentially a target benefit pension. The cap on contributions is what leads me to believe that, Mr. Speaker. If the boards are unable to raise enough money because of the cap in order to set the plans on a solid footing, then they would have no choice but to reduce the benefits. That, in my view, is a target benefit plan, not a defined benefit plan, and that's why I've been saying that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues in the other opposition parties. I believe that we've had excellent co-operation on this bill. I think that the government has shown that at this point in time, at least, it's prepared to make some compromises, and I think that's a good thing. I think that this Legislature and the opposition have proved their worth in this debate and in this fight, and it has shown that we can indeed influence the course of government policy. We can stand up on behalf of our constituents, fight for them, and get results. So I'm very proud of the work that we've all done together. I do thank the government for taking the position that it's now taken, that there should be public hearings on this bill.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and sit down. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, then the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

8:00

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to speak opposed to this hoist motion. Surprise, surprise. I'm going to do that because I'm going to fill the House in on a little bit of history that has happened in the last little while, and that is that we've have some very good discussions with the AUPE and Mr. Smith and a number of folks that have been in to see me, including some of the other unions and some of the other representatives. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood talks about the fact that he wants the Alberta public to see some of this debate, and I agree with him. I think that there are some very good abilities for us to do that if we are able to continue with Bill 9 and do the vote and then move to what might be – who knows? – a referral motion coming forward prior to going to Committee of the Whole, as the hon. member has mentioned.

In fact, that is part of the discussion that I've had with some members of the public-sector unions in terms of some of the discussions around the new relationship and building that relationship, rebuilding that trust. This is part of that. I'm looking forward to fulfilling some discussions that I had with Mr. Smith and moving forward with the discussion around preserving the

defined benefit pension plan for our public-sector employees because at the crux of it, Mr. Speaker, all of this centres around the fact that what we are trying to do is preserve the pension promise. I'll say it again. I've said it in this House a number of times. To do nothing, to simply hoist the bill and say that everything's fine is not to fulfill the fiduciary duty that this House has and this government has to the employees of the public sector. To do nothing is to simply wait and see what is going to happen in the marketplaces and then to have all of the fears, frankly, that the opposition has put forward probably come true.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if at the end of the day the decision is that, "Well, we'll do nothing; we'll just wait and see," this government in the future is going to have to deal with some very serious issues much like what Alaska is dealing with today, much like what New Brunswick and the Maritimes have dealt with, much like many jurisdictions who are trying now to preserve what they can of the benefits that were offered to their employees.

Mr. Speaker, to hoist this bill at this stage is to stop the discussion, and I think that would be a very bad idea not only for this Legislature but also for those employees. So I would vote against and urge to vote against this hoist.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Seeing none, I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment to Bill 9. Obviously, my colleague from Calgary-McCall put this forward on my behalf, and it's a clear indication that it's the last step in a bill if you're going to try and get it discussed, get it consulted appropriately when nothing else has succeeded. We've asked for this in many different ways. In fact, I find it a bit disingenuous that the minister would say that he can't possibly accept a hoist because when it was suggested that it be referred to committee for consultation, that was rejected as well. If that isn't inconsistent, I don't know what is. We gave the option to this party to do the right thing, to refer it to committee, to open it up to broad consultation and really listen to the people who are going to have the impact of the bill, and they rejected that, so we have nothing left on this side except to call for a hoist. So for the minister to say that this is an inappropriate amendment because it doesn't allow for proper consultation I find a bit disingenuous.

Frankly, the assault on some of our most fragile individuals, whether they're retired now or about to retire, and the sense that they don't have any input, that they're just going to have to accept whatever comes down, is very difficult. They have not only created a lot of fear but offended a lot of well-meaning people who – by the way, hundreds of towns, villages, municipalities, health services, libraries. We're talking about almost half the voting public if it were the last election. We're talking about 300,000-plus people who are affected by something that they've had no input into and, especially after bills 45 and 46, a very strong sense that this government is all about its own agenda, its own plans for what's best for Albertans, and a population that has grown tired of this kind of arrogance, entitlement, even bullying.

I alluded to Bill 46, the Public Service Salary Restraint Act, which would have imposed a four-year wage settlement on AUPE members and was a clear violation of Charter rights to bargain collectively. I referred to Bill 45, the Public Sector Services Continuation Act, which also is an assault on free speech and freedom of association. There are some other bills that really



smacked of bullying that I think this government is now recognizing are not sitting well with Albertans and are going to come back to haunt them in a year or two, whenever they choose to call the next election.

Bill 26, the Assurance for Students Act, made the modified framework agreement binding on all school boards, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Boards Association, the Crown, and the Minister of Education. It became law despite the fact that the Calgary board of education, Alberta's largest school board, with a hundred thousand students, twice voted to reject the deal.

Bill 22, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act: again, top-down decision-making, in which Treaty 8 and Treaty 6 vocally and in their presence here in the Legislature rejected this levy being placed without their full consultation and without recognizing that this would have impacts on their benefit agreements.

Bill 17, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2013, granting the minister the power to compel municipalities to find solutions to sustainability challenges, including the ability to dismiss entire municipal councils or their chief administrative officers if they failed to carry out the ministerial orders satisfactorily.

Bill 50, the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, is still coming back after five years, mandating the construction of billions of dollars worth of unnecessary large transmission lines over private land across Alberta.

Bill 44, the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act, 2009. Five years ago section 9 amended section 11 of the Human Rights Act by requiring schools to provide notice to parents or guardians when subject matters concerning religion, sexuality, or sexual orientation are explicitly taught in class. Again, opposed by many school boards and thoughtful citizens and teachers.

Bill 19, the Land Assembly Project Area Act, granting the government the authority to freeze large tracts of private land for public purposes without full compensation or an appeal process.

Of course, the infamous Bill 11, the Health Care Protection Act, prohibiting against private hospitals, actually a ruse meant to open the door to more private health care in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that Albertans have become cynical about this government with so many examples of unilateral decisions, no recognition of the need for consultation with the various stakeholders or accommodation. I don't mean just going in and saying, "This is our plan; what do you think?" but actually going in and saying: "Here is a problem we all share. How shall we solve it?"

In this case the minister has identified some problems in unfunded liability, perhaps, with longer lived citizens and concerns about the sustainability of pensions. Fine. Why not take this to the people, have a robust and comprehensive consultation with the people who are actually going to live with the consequences, not only the boards but the individuals themselves and the stakeholders and the managers of these funds?

**8:10**

That clearly was not the case, and this government is now caving as they recognize that this simply is not going to fly anymore in Alberta. They're going to pay a huge price for this. In fact, this could still be the death knell for this party in the next election. I think there's a recognition of that and a recognition that the next leader does not want to live with the legacy of this consistently poor set of processes around bills which have not honoured democracy, have not honoured a respect for the public and for the citizens of Alberta, and have not even honoured some

of the elected officials, city officials, and others who have an important stake and role in that.

As we heard earlier today from the mayor of Calgary, clearly they haven't thought through the vast unexpected impacts from these heavy-handed, top-down decisions. Process matters. How we go through change with people matters. The end result may be the same, but if you don't follow a fair and responsible and open and consultative and accommodating process, you end up where we are today. Suddenly the government realizes that it's gone too far, and half the voting public in Alberta is saying that we can no longer tolerate this kind of abuse of power.

This amendment, I think, Mr. Speaker, is the last opportunity at this reading, at least, for opposition to say: enough is enough. Pull this bill. We are going to be losers as part of this government and not only the pensioners themselves, who will continue to resist and be stressed and potentially have problems in their own financial management and their own families' impact, but it will also impact on all of us and especially our human services.

**Mr. Kang:** We'll all pay the price.

**Dr. Swann:** Every one of us will pay a price. That's right.

This is our last opportunity, and I think it's appropriate that this government acknowledge that they refused to accept a reasoned amendment and a referral to committee and that this is the last possible avenue for the opposition to say: "Stop. Hold off. Pause and take a second sober look." We don't have Senators here, so we're depending on you folks who have a majority in government to pause a bit and think about not only the impacts on family, some of your own employees, our future in Alberta in terms of recruiting and retaining people in the public sector, and sending a message of real respect and honour to the people who continue to serve us every day in this House, in our institutions, in our towns, municipalities, villages, libraries, all the different government services that we've come to appreciate. Let them know that we are now taking a sober second look and ensuring that everybody participates in what will be a very significant and, hopefully, a positive outcome at the end of the day when the process is followed in an honest and authentic way.

We'll certainly be supporting this, and I hope others will see the wisdom in lifting this bill from the table. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I'm absolutely delighted by what I've observed over the last two weeks in this House. I've heard people speak to this bill with real passion and experience, and I've seen people listen. I'm very, very heartened by that approach to resolving this bill.

I'm going to speak against the amendment on the understanding that in the Committee of the Whole this bill will be referred to an all-party standing committee on economic futures, perhaps. But I want to talk a little more broadly about what might be considered in that all-party committee. Certainly, the issue of pensions, and I'm a big fan of looking into pensions. I think we have to be fiscally responsible, and we do have to figure out what we're going to do with all of our pension plans provincially and federally. What's happened in Ontario is really quite startling for most of us.

But while we're looking at the question of consultation, which I think is at the root of the issue that we're discussing here today, I think it would be very timely and appropriate for that all-party committee to actually look at consultation and how it's done,

especially in an area as complex as pension policy. For example, electricity is a very, very complex area. How do you go out into the public space, work with stakeholders who have really specific knowledge of pensions, and then work with the broader public, who have a broader understanding? It's the two pieces: how you do consultation, and then how do you raise awareness and even the education of the public?

What I would recommend, Mr. Speaker, is that as we go forward with this, it's an opportunity to actually look at: what are wise practices in this province and beyond this province's borders for consultation with key stakeholders and the public in an area as complex as this? And then also: what are the wise practices for educating the public, and what are the reasonable outcomes? How much time should we be spending doing that work before we assume that the public has enough information to make decisions or the key stakeholders have enough information?

Trust is also the desired outcome of all of this. I think every speaker that's spoken to this particular bill has mentioned the failure of trust. There isn't trust here. It's a very, very sensitive issue because it affects people's security. I'm not sure we're going to get to trust right away in all cases. I think, you know, you can consult too much, and you don't make decisions. It's kind of the Goldilocks theory of consultation. What's too little? What's too much? What's just right? I think we have to look at what other examples work in other jurisdictions and right here and maybe even do some consultation road mapping and a policy framework so that we can look at that and talk to the public and key stakeholders about what's reasonable in situations like this.

I truly hope that the public does come to understand the importance of pension legislation for all of us and especially our children and grandchildren. The education piece of this is really, really essential.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of this hoist motion, again, the logic behind it being that we don't speak to it for another six months, in which case this current bill as it's drafted will die, and we can start from scratch.

I find it interesting that, you know, the hon. President of Treasury Board spoke against this hoist motion so that we don't stop the discussion. I think there is adequate evidence to show that the discussion never really started with many of our public-sector workers, many of the unions, that have been very vocal over the last number of weeks. I know for a fact that there have been thousands of e-mails, phone calls, and letters received by members on all sides of this House from workers quite frustrated with this government, and rightly so. I mean, for a government that loves to talk about the word "consultation" and how they speak with folks, their actions don't seem to live up to their words. Although I could stand here and give numerous examples where consultation never took place even though it was asserted, I won't do that.

I just wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that once again we're in a position where – should this bill get referred to committee in Committee of the Whole, I do see that as a positive step. But I do need to voice my frustration with the fact that once again it's another example of the government putting forward poor legislation then being stopped in its tracks by the public, by opposition parties and forced to go back to the table. If it was done with adequate consultation in the first place, then we wouldn't

have to be here and constantly go in circles. We've seen examples of this from the amendment to the municipalities act, where, again, amendments that the Alberta NDP put forward were voted down originally, last year, and then an amendment to the bill came forward and – surprise, surprise – half of the changes in there were the exact amendments that we put forward.

You know, again, my frustration is with the actions of this government in again attacking public-sector workers. We see today that they've turned their sights onto teachers in this province. But, you know, many Albertans are quite frustrated with this government, and rightly so.

8:20

Again, I disagree with the President of Treasury Board saying that by not bringing forward this legislation, we're doing nothing. Years ago when the contribution rates went up, that was a way that several of these pension plans dealt with the downturn in 2008 and the fact that there was an unfunded liability portion. That has been aggressively paid back year over year, and again we are on track to fulfill that obligation. I appreciate the frustration that Albertans have, looking at this attack and the effect that this bill would have on working Albertans.

Again, it needs to be stressed that if we want to attract and retain quality workers in the public sector, what we offer needs to be at least somewhat comparable to the private sector; otherwise, we're not going to get these great workers and front-line staff. Again, looking at pensions as being a part of the contract or the agreement on how workers will be paid over the course of their lives, the decisions of many Albertans to join the public sector were made looking at wages, at benefits, and looking at pensions, so to make a change midgame goes beyond unfair and just is outright wrong, Mr. Speaker. That's been the voice of many working Albertans over the last few weeks and the last couple of months.

I do think it's worth noting that we've got mayors, councillors, and organizations, including the AAMDC and the AUMA, opposed to this, worried about the effects it's going to have on the workers that they depend on in order to make their municipalities work day in and day out, Mr. Speaker. These are real, valid concerns. I mean, we're talking about this bill being wrong in the fact that it's attacking our seniors. It's attacking workers who have devoted their lives to the public service and attacking as well and having negative impacts on different municipalities.

I do find it frustrating as well, Mr. Speaker, that the bulk of the people affected by the changes proposed in Bill 9 are women. I think we have a long way to go to reach equality in this province. This bill is 10 steps backwards. I do find it interesting, by the way, that if women were paid equally in this province, there would be a lot more money in the pension plans as we speak. The unfunded liability would be much lower. Two out of 3 of the PSPP members are women, and sadly they earn on average \$10,000 a year less than men. When we look at the amount of contributions that would be made to the pension plan, that is significant. You know, I think, again, because women are about 70 per cent of public-sector plan members and they live longer and earn less, they'll exponentially be impacted by these changes in their senior years and be at much higher risk of being in poverty.

Again, the government is taking a short-sighted approach, making sweeping changes right now, where the impact is going to be that we are going to have more seniors living in poverty and relying on the system for assistance. You know, either we ensure that they can retire with dignity and have the dollars there for a retirement which is modest, Mr. Speaker – we're not talking about

lavish pensions here – or we claw that back and force more people into poverty.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this hoist. Let's encourage the government to sit down at the table with not just the board members but all of the different public-sector unions that are going to be affected, with the workers, the front-line folks, and have a real, true discussion about what we can do moving forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to say a couple of words. This has been a very interesting and educative process for, I think, all of us here in the House and outside, across the province, too. It's helped a lot of people that normally don't think about things that happen in the Legislature suddenly become much more interested in both the political process and, I think, the democratic process, too, because, of course, pensions are not just a way by which we can save for retirement, but they also provide a sense of security during the course of your working life, for both yourself and for your family and your loved ones to know that there's something there to look forward to. As has been said many times, these public-service pensions are very modest – it's not like we're talking about great riches; the average draw on them is \$15,000 to \$17,000 a year – but, as I say, it's that sense of security, knowing that there's something to look after one's future with, with other savings and with Canada pension and so forth as well.

I think it's important, again, to just review what's happened here very briefly, to help everyone to understand what a pension actually is and how a pension plan lives through its lifetime, not just in five or 10 or 15 years but more like 30 or 40 or even 60 years, as we go through different cycles of the population, as we have surges, as we saw through the baby boomers coming through and so forth. The survivability and the viability of a pension plan is not just something you can measure by taking a photograph or a snapshot at any one time. Rather, you have to look at that intergenerational aspect, which includes the vagaries, the ups and downs, of our economy and the changes in demographics over time as well.

I think, too, Mr. Speaker, we have to move to change and strengthen public and also private pension plans across this province and remind ourselves that a majority of Albertans do not have adequate savings for their retirement. Let's do something about that, too, while we start to talk about pensions in the public service. It's an opportunity for us to address this nagging question, this elephant in the room, that the majority of Albertans are not prepared for their retirement and saving adequately for their retirement.

I am a member of the Economic Future Committee, and I look forward to having further discussion on this. There are many, many intelligent people that have a vested interest in seeing positive changes and constructive changes. Certainly, I never doubted the sincerity and the intention, in many ways, of the Finance minister and President of the Treasury Board in talking about the necessity to change to ensure the viability of our pensions for the future. I think we might have had some misrepresentation or some confusion about how we might go about doing that but always in the spirit of democracy and in the spirit of practical solutions.

I think this choice to move to not pass this legislation at this time, to move it to further public discussion is very wise, very practical, and I applaud everyone who has contributed to that process. It's the way that our Legislature should work, it's a way by which we could reach out and engage the larger population, and it's a way by which we can, I think, make a more sincere plan that includes everyone, ensuring that we have a pension future for everybody in this province.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there other speakers on the amendment?

Seeing no other speakers, I'll call the question on the hoist amendment H1.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 9 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll call the question on second reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:30 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allen	Goudreau	Oberle
Amery	Griffiths	Olesen
Bhardwaj	Horner	Quadri
Bhullar	Hughes	Quest
Brown	Jansen	Rodney
Calahasen	Jeneroux	Sandhu
Campbell	Johnson, L.	Sarich
Cusanelli	Kennedy-Glans	Scott
Dallas	Klimchuk	Starke
Dorward	Kubinec	VanderBurg
Drysdale	Leskiw	Weadick
Fawcett	Luan	Woo-Paw
Fenske	McDonald	Xiao
Fritz	McQueen	Young

Against the motion:

Bilous	Kang	Strankman
Blakeman	Mason	Swann
Donovan	McAllister	Towle
Eggen	Pedersen	Wilson
Hale	Sherman	

Totals: For – 42 Against – 14

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It obviously has been noted that there are some issues, some concerns perhaps, that require some additional discussion at a different level and through a different committee and through that process, as was mentioned earlier. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 78.1 I would move that Bill 9, Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014, be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, where it can receive additional comments, and then be

brought back for follow-up discussion in the first sitting of the October session of the Legislature this year.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This motion is not debatable.

[Motion carried]

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has also been noted that there are some concerns that would require some additional discussion at a different level and through a different committee on Bill 10. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 78.1 I would move that Bill 10, Employment Pension (Private Sector) Plans Amendment Act, 2014, be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, where it can receive additional comments, and then be brought back for follow-up discussion in the first sitting of the October session of the Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.  
This motion is also not debatable.

[Motion carried]

**Bill 11**  
**Child, Youth and Family Enhancement**  
**Amendment Act, 2014**

[Adjourned debate April 24: Mr. Bilous]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, you still have two minutes left to speak.

**Mr. Bilous:** Excellent. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will just give a summary of my position, you know, speaking to the fact that this amendment act is a step in the right direction, but there are still many questions that remain outstanding. I do look forward to debating this in Committee of the Whole and the amendments that I'm sure my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona will bring forward.

Just to outline one of the concerns, reporting is still going to be internal, so there is discretion about the review process used. We haven't seen an increase in the budget in order to carry out these investigations, Mr. Speaker. Again, the concern is about the time allocation around the investigations only going back two years.

So I hope that the hon. minister will engage in robust conversation in Committee of the Whole on this bill and be open to amendments that we put forward. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in second on Bill 11, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014. Yes, a very significant bill in terms of its potential impact for families and children in care. It follows, of course, by five months the joint *Edmonton Journal-Calgary Herald* investigation revealing that the province was dramatically underreporting the number of children who died in care and failing to monitor implementation of recommendations to prevent similar deaths.

There's no question that this is progress. I respect the minister for taking this boldly and decisively and opening up not only the questions of the elimination of the publication ban that was in place and reversing that decision but also the recognition that quality control, quality assurance in the ministry demands that

there be more openness and accountability as well as protection for the workers, who are unfortunately exposed to the traumas of these unfortunate families every day and need to be clearly given the respect and the freedom and the protection to at least acknowledge tragedy, acknowledge where problems have occurred, and do whatever is possible to redress some of those circumstances that could be changed.

Let me say that lifting the publication ban will allow families to speak publicly while ensuring that they receive the respect and recognition that they deserve. The bill will also expand the Child and Youth Advocate's investigative powers to include not only the time during their care but two years after they leave care. Obviously, we have questions about what kind of resources the Child and Youth Advocate is going to have to do the job and do it fully.

It's also important to recognize that the minister is well aware that the stresses and strains on his ministry have created conditions in which many workers do not feel empowered, do not feel that they have the confidence or the leadership in some cases that they need from management and that if we do not address some of those internal management issues, relational issues, trust issues, it is going to be very difficult to change the quality of care and the accountability that all of us want to see in the interests of children and their families.

8:50

I'm also encouraged by some of the discussion both with the minister and in this House, that there is a recognition that this ministry has to start dealing upstream. They have to start dealing with root cause and preventive issues and early identification of risk and poverty and mental illness, addictions, the kinds of issues that we need to identify as early as possible. These were alluded to today in question period, where a child of 14 days died in a family that should have been identified as high risk from the outset.

It's also, I think, important to say that anyone associated with the child can apply for an ex parte ban on publication and that a judge would have to consider the best interests of the family and especially the siblings of the dead child and the known wishes, if there were any, of the deceased child. These are all indications that we're moving forward with a more humane, accountable, and effective child care ministry.

Internally the council for quality assurance already has the power to appoint an expert panel to review child deaths and make those reports public, but under this new bill the council could also appoint committees to study, assess, and evaluate the provision of intervention services. That's progress. In addition, the director of children's services has the option to conduct an internal review and will be required to publicly report the findings and recommendations from those internal reviews along with the responses and recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm cautiously optimistic that this bill is going to move us to a very much more robust and constructive, hopefully, climate and culture, that are shifting in the ministry. I look forward to further debate.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to second reading of Bill 11. As the former Human Services critic for the Official Opposition this bill has a special place for me. Last fall we all lived through what has been dubbed

the fatal care series, a deeply impactful one, I'm sure, on every member in this House. This is, you know, a welcomed response, and I commend the Minister of Human Services for taking these steps.

I know that there are some amendments that our caucus will be bringing forward. Hopefully, they will be, I guess, considered at least by the minister. But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I think that the intent of Bill 11 is very strong. Even just today with the Child and Youth Advocate releasing another report of another death of a child in care, another tragic story, as they all are, you know, it's important that we in this House take every opportunity that we can to strengthen our child welfare system and ensure that we do everything we can to give the best quality of life to every child, whether they are in the foster system, recognizing that there are dozens if not hundreds and thousands of successful stories that happen every single day within that system. There are thousands of children that are in the system every single day, and we just need to make sure that we do our very best to protect them.

You know, it was an apt reminder today, when the Child and Youth Advocate released the report and dubbed the child's name as Baby Annie. One can hope that after this legislation is passed, we will be able to put a face to Baby Annie's name and every child's name who has tragically passed while in government care or having received services from the government, which is another very strong part of this bill. We're not just considering those who are currently receiving services, but if they have received services in the past, the Child and Youth Advocate will have the opportunity to investigate that death as well.

So there are some positive steps in this bill. It's welcomed. It's something that I'm happy to see and at this point most definitely happy to support, at second reading. I look forward to further discussions and debate as we move into Committee of the Whole.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

Before I acknowledge the next speaker, I'd like to acknowledge our MLA for a Day students, who have joined us in the gallery.

Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to speak to Bill 11. I have a number of comments that I would like to make with respect to this bill. We think that the bill is a positive but tentative first step in the right direction. We don't believe, however, that it goes nearly far enough in tackling the secrecy and bureaucracy which ultimately harm our ability to improve the lives of children.

I want to congratulate the media, particularly the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald*, for their exhaustive feature which shone a light on this problem, something that we and others in this House have been trying to grapple with in this House for a long time. There was a lot of smoke, Mr. Speaker. It was difficult to cut through it.

I also want to commend my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for her long fight to get the children's advocate made an officer of the Legislature rather than simply an arm of the minister, as was previously the case. It shouldn't take that long to make these kinds of steps, and I'm pleased to see that the pace of change has picked up considerably under the new minister. I congratulate him but also want to indicate that we will be pushing for change beyond what he's offering at the time.

It took a four-year legal battle for the newspapers I mentioned to unveil that 175 children in care or receiving services had died

between 1999 and 2013, and when the minister finally received the full number, about a month after the publication of those articles, it was a shocking 741. Mr. Speaker, that is far too many.

I want to address the question of publication bans. Changes to the publication bans are a step towards increased transparency, and I want to indicate that, you know, this has been a serious issue. Families want to be able to talk about their children whom they have lost and have been unable to do so. The government pretended for many years that that was to protect the child, but in actual fact, Mr. Speaker, we believe it was there to protect the government and to protect a flawed system. We think that that's a good step although long overdue. The government has been promising to review that ban for over three years with no action, so I'm glad to see that it does that.

I think the bill safeguards the ability of the courts to restrict the publication of this information where it's necessary for children, and that's something that we can agree with. But there are a lot of difficulties, a number of problems that could reduce the effectiveness of the change. Right now the idea is that a party must apply to the court for an order to restrict publication, and nobody has to be notified. The government is still preserving the power to get publication bans without any need for notice to any other party – for example, the media or the family – so we have a problem with that particular piece. In order to get the restrictions removed, the media or another party would have to go through a possibly lengthy court process. We don't think that that should be permitted, so this is an area where the bill doesn't go far enough, in our view. The government should not have that unrestricted power as well.

9:00

We like the idea of reverse onus. The information should be available to the public, but there need to be exceptions for the best interests of the child or the family. A number of other provinces have effective publication bans. Ontario and P.E.I. have no restrictions. Saskatchewan and Manitoba allow the publication of the name and information about the child if it comes from the family. B.C. and Newfoundland and Labrador allow for the publication of the name and information about the child if it comes from family or other sources. There are only a couple of other provinces, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, that have the kind of ban that Alberta has traditionally had.

On another point, we're very pleased to see an expanded investigative mandate for the Child and Youth Advocate. The advocate can now investigate deaths that occur within two years of receiving services. That's an important change. The advocate will also have the ability to investigate an injury or death that occurred while the child was receiving a service under the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act or a service provided to children in the youth criminal justice system. These were previously excluded, so that's a good change, that we can support.

However, serious injuries can still only be investigated if they occur while a child is receiving services. I know my colleague for Edmonton-Strathcona has repeatedly called for investigations of the death of every child in care or receiving services. At the Legislative Offices Committee of November 29, 2013, we brought forward a motion to expand the budget of the Child and Youth Advocate so that these investigations could be done.

Mr. Speaker, here's the rub. The government provides the legal capacity for these investigations to be occurring but does not necessarily provide the resources to the Child and Youth Advocate in order to perform those. That is the question. We see this time and again from this government. They will legally set out something that is very good and positive and should be done but

do not provide the resources to do it; for example, health and safety, environmental investigations, and so on. It's a common problem with this government, and the two need to go together.

We think that the advocate does have an important role in providing justice and closure for children who have been injured or died, but it has another important objective, to provide independent insight and analysis into the child intervention system to ensure that we can make necessary improvements to prevent future deaths or injuries. But, again, there need to be resources and a mandate, and expanding the investigative mandate is a good first step.

I just want to mention that the advocate has already confirmed that due to lack of resources he has no choice but to prioritize and filter the cases that get reported to his office. Mr. Speaker, this is, I think, an important thing to speak about. In 2012-13 20 cases were reported to the advocate. Only four proceeded to a full investigative review. The advocate must differentiate responses in each case because he doesn't have adequate resources, and there is no mandatory provision for investigative review.

Mr. Speaker, the advocate has to decide whether or not to conduct an initial assessment based solely on a snapshot provided by the Chief Medical Examiner and Human Services, which is about a page long. Even then, he must decide after the initial assessment whether or not to proceed with the investigation. He's not being provided with the information or resources he needs to make these decisions in all cases. We've raised this question as well with the children's advocate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona asked him in the Legislative Offices Committee, and he admitted that if he had more resources, he could conduct a more fulsome review of a large number of cases.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is something that I would really like the minister to address and which I think the Treasury Board should address: whether or not sufficient resources are being made available. If they are not, then they should be, and we shouldn't wait for the next budget to do that.

Those are some of my comments.

We are also concerned that there is no expansion of the mandate to include investigation of serious injuries that occurred within two years of receiving services. These can be just as important as deaths in terms of providing us with information about how to improve the system and identifying systemic issues that increase the risk for children.

There's still no change to make these investigations and reports mandatory. Reports and information are only made public when there's been a full investigative review. That means that in the 16 cases that did not proceed to a full investigation by the advocate last year, we have no public information on what happened to the children, what circumstances put them at risk in the first place, or how their case was dealt with within the child intervention system and the death or injury review process. Mr. Speaker, again, it all comes down to resources.

In terms of the quality assurance council and the review process and the reports, the bill expands the role of the quality assurance council. It also expands the ability of the council to review deaths or injuries of all children receiving intervention services. In addition to the expert review panels that the council can currently appoint to investigate deaths and injuries, there will also now be committees for other quality assurance activities. Mr. Speaker, hopefully, practically, this will provide additional analysis and evaluation of the system and how it's working so that we may

further improve it, but there's not much clarity or guidance from the bill regarding what sort of activities these committees might undertake. We'd like to know who'd be responsible for adequately monitoring and tracking recommendations from both internal council reports and the Child and Youth Advocate public reports.

Mr. Speaker, these changes to the role and scope of the quality assurance council are good steps towards improving the child intervention system and identifying systemic issues. However, there are not many improvements to the secrecy and bureaucracy of the current review system. The reports of the committees will remain internal, and there is no provision for their public release, as there is for expert review panel reports. There's no change to the current public reporting requirements for the expert review panels, which leave it up to the discretion of the minister to direct if they will be publicly released or not. Those reports may contain many useful recommendations, and we believe that those recommendations should not be released at the discretion of the minister but just released.

I want to just indicate, Mr. Speaker, that there are some issues as well with the annual report. They will still include reporting on the exercise of the powers and the performance of the council. There are some improvements there.

Mr. Speaker, overall, the concerns are that there is still a relatively high degree of secrecy and confidentiality and discretion by the minister and the government with respect to many of the issues around children's services. We are also concerned that there is no recognition, or apparently no recognition, that adequate resources need to be applied to the officers, to the department, and to the children's advocate in order that they can carry out all of the important functions set out for them in this act.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, this act is a significant improvement over the existing system, and I congratulate the minister for moving in the right direction. I hope we will see more in the future with regard to these changes. It has been something that the government should have dealt with many years ago, but it was more interested in protecting its own political hide than it was in the welfare of the children in its care. I don't think you can draw any other conclusion. I'm glad that that seems to be changing. I'm encouraged by that.

I'm happy to support this bill with my other caucus members. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona will be here tomorrow to address the bill, and she'll probably have quite a bit more to say on the matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, I'll look for the next speaker. No other speakers?

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Campbell:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Campbell:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Seeing that the future Stanley Cup champions, the L.A. Kings, are on TV right now, I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:10 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

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