



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 25, 2016

Day 33

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
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Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 54 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the students, teachers, and staff from Calgary Jewish Academy. I'm very pleased that the students from the school are here today with us to learn about politics by actually experiencing it. I would like to request the students, teachers, and staff from Calgary Jewish Academy to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, we have some visitors that arrived. With your permission I would now ask for the House's indulgence.

Government House Leader, I believe you have a guest today.

Introduction of Visitors

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a distinguished guest, Ian Waddell. Mr. Waddell served 14 years as a Member of Parliament for Vancouver Kingsway. He was later elected to the British Columbia Legislature, where he held three significant cabinet posts. He was Minister of Small Business, Tourism and Culture. He was Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. As minister Mr. Waddell was instrumental in securing the 2010 Winter Olympics, and he championed indigenous participation, environmental sustainability, and athlete involvement in the early planning stages. Under his ministerial guidance the B.C. film industry grew into a billion dollar industry. He is a published author, a documentary filmmaker, and a TV and radio commentator. I would ask Mr. Waddell to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a former colleague and Member of this Legislative Assembly for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Hopefully he's less trouble in your gallery today than he was in the House. Mr. Luke Ouellette, please stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome to both our visitors.

Back to Introduction of Guests. The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you all of my students from the Kehewin community education centre. I would specifically like to mention their teachers Mr. Baptiste and Mr. McMaster. If they could rise,

and all of the students as well, I would appreciate it if we could give them a warm welcome from everybody in the Chamber for them coming and visiting us today.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school guests, hon. members?

Seeing none, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 11 interns who started their work in ministerial offices yesterday: Mayda Ali, Bashir Mohamed, Jacob Schweda, Dylan Williams, Katie Choi, Amelia Van Hoffen, Montana Cardinal, Karima Abubakar, Aydan Anderson, Chris Edwards, and Azra Samji. These interns will be busy supporting the work of various ministers until August 26. When they return to their respective and diverse university programs, they will take with them a better understanding of the work of government as it serves the people of Alberta. I would ask these guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two introductions today, and I'll go through them in alphabetical order so that they know that there's no preference, I guess, to my guests. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to the Assembly a group from the Edmonton Dream Centre. The Dream Centre is a residential, faith-based addiction recovery centre for women located in my constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar that has helped more than 500 women and their families. On June 17 the Dream Centre holds its annual Leap of Faith, a skydiving fundraiser. That's right: skydiving. Now, I won't be partaking in this particular fundraiser because I am a coward. However, there are a lot of members in this Assembly that I would pay money to have them go take a leap. If you're interested in that, please come and approach me after the session. I'd ask them to rise as I say their names so that they can be recognized. Today we have with us Mark Evans, Connie Spooner, Colleen Foley, Charles Evans, Mike Ferber, Dawn Himer, Dorine Kielly, Vivian Dersch, Marleen Gray, Jennifer Den Ouden, Sara Himer, and Greg Assaly. I ask that our fellow members please give this team a warm welcome to this Assembly.

Second introduction, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to introduce to you and to this Assembly a group from the Alberta and Northwest Territories chapter of the MS Society of Canada. If they could please rise when I say their names. We have today with us Garry Wheeler; Julia Nimilowich; Julie Kelndorfer; a former member of this Assembly, Mrs. Judy Gordon, who represented the constituency of Lacombe-Stettler for a long time; Luwam Kiflemariam; and Amanda Cundliffe. Their office is located in my constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I've had the opportunity to meet the wonderful staff and participate in their events. Today marks World MS Day, and our province has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world. I personally have two aunts who have bravely lived with MS. I encourage my colleagues to participate or donate to the MS walk happening this Sunday because I know that every step and every donation matters. I ask my fellow members to please give this group a warm welcome to this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two leaders with Alberta Blue Cross. Those are President Ray Pisani and vice-president, government, Dianne Balon. If they could both stand. As one of our partner organizations in health care, Alberta Blue Cross is to be commended for the innovative approach it takes to supporting wellness of Albertans. While perhaps best known as a benefits provider, Alberta Blue Cross also takes a leading role in programs aimed at fostering an active lifestyle and promoting wellness amongst postsecondary students as well. This collaborative work by Alberta Blue Cross provides tremendous value in primary health care delivery in the province of Alberta. I'd ask that our guests now receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Bo Zhang and Savana Brown. Please stand. Bo is one of my constituency assistants. He is currently finishing up his bachelor of arts in political science and sociology at the University of Alberta. Prior to working in my office, he worked for the Ministry of Infrastructure and the University of Alberta Students' Union. We are thankful to have his support in our office. Savana is a social work student at NorQuest College, pursuing her diploma. She is in her final year and is doing her field placement at our constituency office. Savana is fortunate to have the opportunity for professional development working alongside the excellent support of my constituency staff. Bo and Savana are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that you join me in giving them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Jim and Pat Bower from Red Deer. Jim and Pat are the parents of Joe Bower, who left us all far too soon. I'll be paying tribute to Joe this afternoon as a friend to me, a friend to the Alberta Party, and a friend to our province. Jim and Pat have very deep roots in Alberta. Jim is a fourth-generation farmer. Those of you who know Red Deer will be familiar with the name Bower. He's not just a farmer; he's an entrepreneur. Jim and Pat are a true embodiment of the Alberta spirit. I'd ask Pat and Jim, please, to stand now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Professor Annalise Acorn, who is a professor of law at the University of Alberta. Her mother, June Acorn, was ably assisted by her – June was unable to join us here today – in assembling a document endorsed by over 5,200 like-minded people. The document encourages the Alberta government to save and repurpose the old Royal Alberta Museum. I'd ask Professor Acorn to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly four guests representing Vivo for Healthier Generations. Please rise as I say your names: Cynthia Watson, who recently became CEO, or chief evolution officer, at Vivo; Amtul Siddiqui, board member of Vivo – she works with the Red Cross, and her last few weeks have been spent working on the fire recovery effort in Fort McMurray – Nicole Dawe, manager of philanthropy with Vivo; and Sue Scott, the founding CEO of Vivo. We'll hear more about Sue and her contributions in my member's statement a little bit later. I now ask my colleagues to extend the fine, traditional warm welcome of this Legislature to our guests.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you Vanessa Foran, president and CEO of the Asthma Society of Canada, who was honoured this morning to receive the 2016 Asthma Society of Canada's award for leadership and public policy for our government's climate leadership plan. I invite Ms Foran to rise and to be extended the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mayda Ali, who worked as a volunteer research assistant in my constituency office of Calgary-Glenmore. Mayda Ali is currently an Alberta student ministerial intern in the Premier's stakeholder relations office, and she is in her final year of international studies at the University of Calgary. She was introduced to the group earlier, but I'm very pleased that she is here with us today. I would like to request Mayda Ali to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

Carbon Levy

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, Albertans all across our province woke up this morning to news that life will be even more expensive for them because of the NDP government. Though no fault of their own, hundreds of thousands of Alberta families are finding out that the cost of living in our province will be more expensive because of a risky and ideological carbon tax. Let me be absolutely clear. This tax was not campaigned on, and it wasn't asked for, and I think that the NDP know it, too. Just like when my kids know they've done something really bad and have a million explanations for why they should get off the hook, the NDP have tried to show how great their carbon tax is by providing a list as long as a phone book of people giving lukewarm supportive quotes.

I love this province, and I will continue to teach my children how to be responsible stewards of this earth. I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are many things, but naive is not one of them. They will see clearly what this climate plan is: an excuse to tax everyday Albertans and make life more expensive.

The money that will be going towards the carbon tax will force families to make very difficult decisions about where to cut back.

It's all well and good for the NDP government to be pie in the sky, parading around with self-validation on how great the carbon tax is, but I know what the real cost will be for Alberta families. Families will have to cut back on their groceries and maybe go for fewer fresh fruits and vegetables. Families will have to have the difficult conversation with their kids to say that this year they can't afford the registration fees for their hockey or ballet. In total, the typical family will be paying at least an extra thousand dollars out of pocket because of this tax.

The facts are clear. This carbon tax will also disproportionately hurt the hard-working moms and dads who are on carpool duty, driving to soccer tournaments, or on snack duty for their playgroup. This carbon tax has been put together with no regard for these hard-working Albertans, and it must be repealed.

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

Joe Bower

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to pay tribute to a man who dedicated his too-short life to education, to his family, and to his community. Red Deer teacher Joe Bower passed away unexpectedly from a heart attack earlier this year, leaving his wife, Tamara, and two young children, Kayley and Sawyer. We're joined today in the gallery by Joe's parents, Jim and Pat Bower.

Joe was more than your ordinary teacher. He taught for 15 years, including time teaching kids on a psychiatric assessment unit. He became known around the world for his education blog, *For the Love of Learning*, which influenced countless teachers and is still widely referenced today. He pushed the boundaries of his profession as an educator, advocating for an end to the traditional marking system, and preferred a more personalized, experiential, and holistic approach to learning. Now, this didn't always go well with the powers that be, but Joe stuck to his guns because he felt passionately that he was doing the right thing for kids. His writing brought widespread acclaim, and he was invited to speak at conferences all over the world.

After news of his death at just 37 years old, tributes poured in from around the world. On this past weekend Joe's colleagues remembered him as he was given a posthumous lifetime membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Joe lived each day to the fullest and contributed tremendously to his home community in and around Red Deer. A fifth-generation Albertan, Joe, like the entire Bower family, knew the value of hard work on the farm and beyond, but he also knew how to have fun. An avid sportsman, he was a keen baseball player and a go-to goalie in pond hockey.

Joe will be missed by all of us but most of all by his family. To Tamara; Pat and Jim; Joe's brother and sister, Jeff and Jenn; and all of Joe's cousins and extended family but especially to Kayley and Sawyer: I want you to know that your dad was a very special man. He made a big difference in our world, and the world needs more Joe Bowers, more people willing to stand up for what they believe in, to stand up for what they think is right even if it's not popular. It's up to all of us to carry on his legacy. Rest in peace.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Energy Policies

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, today I was close to focusing my member's statement on soft, soulful discourse around the incredible importance of seniors enriching our society. I then realized my obligation was not to blow smoke but to honour those same seniors

by standing up, passionately and fiercely if necessary, for a better Alberta, and that is what I plan to do.

Members, today we face a new, daunting, and inescapable challenge in the face of what I have come to think of as an anti-Alberta, job-killing, investment-repelling climate leadership manifesto. I am saddened to see our province facing the real life- and livelihood-altering challenges of unbalanced, irresponsible, dogmatic, and ideological policies of this NDP government. I admit that Albertans were seeking change – responsive government, accountability, humility, and ethical behaviour – and so was I. My party had been hijacked, and I wanted it back, so I fought to represent the people of Calgary-Fish Creek, not in spite of what my party had become but because of it.

Today I fear that the will of Albertans has been forgotten, the steady hand of pioneers dismissed, the entrepreneurial spirit and work ethic diluted. To dismiss as an embarrassing scourge the rich and enviable natural resources that support our prosperity and that we all work hard to responsibly develop is just plain wrong, and I submit that Albertans will fiercely defend their development as key to the Alberta advantage, which has given so many great hope for a better life for them and future generations.

1:50

We are innovators, risk takers, problem solvers. We love the land and take care of those less fortunate. We are people of the soil, staunchly proud of our western heritage, our cowboy ethics, and of our passion for family, friends, and neighbours. We are comfortable with our simple, local way of life. We are also confident though not arrogant yet infinitely adaptable on the world stage. We carry pride in our counties, hamlets, villages, towns, and cities, but we are proud Albertans, patriotic Canadians, and citizens of the world. Mr. Speaker, this is who we are. Let's not screw it up.

Statement by the Speaker

Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we begin, I'd just like to respectfully request that you contain the volume in terms of hitting the desks as well as your verbal feedback to each other. I would just like to encourage each of you to take individual ownership for that, and we will have a much better time together today.

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Levy

Mr. Panda: Calgary's downtown office vacancy rate has almost doubled in one year, and our unemployment rate is climbing towards 9 per cent. When families are anxiously crunching budgets around their kitchen tables, the last thing they want is the added cost of this NDP carbon tax. The full price tag just keeps on growing after the minister finally admitted the carbon tax will raise the price of everything else, but they refuse to release the full study. Will the Premier release the full impact study so it can be debated by all Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, what the opposition is actually saying, both in their questions as well as in their members' statements, is that we shouldn't take action on climate change. That's not what our government is going to do. The opposition is more concerned about scaring Albertans with half-truths and bad information than they are about taking real action. Our government

is going to invest in the very programs that will reduce costs for Albertans in the long term through energy efficiency, through reducing their heating costs over the long term, and through ensuring that our energy industry is able to compete internationally because our reputation has been redeemed.

Mr. Panda: Either there was no study, or they're hiding something.

Albertans will realize the full cost of the NDP's carbon tax when it hits their families. With hundreds of dollars out of pocket, that's the difference between hockey registration or dance classes. While everyone is suffering from a hurting economy, our charitable sector will be punished with higher costs to take care of our most vulnerable. Will the Premier release the full costs of the carbon tax on our charitable sector?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the opposition really is playing fast and loose with the facts here. Their goal is to scare Albertans, not to have a reasonable conversation about climate change and our actions to remediate it. Their claims about the indirect costs of our program are simply not true, and we know that they misuse the numbers because the author of the study that they rely on has gone public to say that they've been misusing the numbers. It would be very helpful for us to have a reasonable conversation, to begin by talking about the real facts.

Mr. Panda: Well, we are asking them to present the facts, real facts.

Albertans know this tax will not only have an impact on their pocketbooks but also on the charities they support. Numbers are rolling in from school boards across the province, and the carbon tax will mean millions of dollars out of the classroom. In our health care system it will be millions of dollars wasted that should go to our front-line workers. Has the government done any studies to find out how many millions will be taken away from health care, seniors, and education and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, one thing I'll say, Mr. Speaker, is that one study that's been out there as a result of the physicians against coal-fired electricity is that we will save roughly \$200 million in our health care system as a result of not treating people for respiratory problems associated with coal. So there are some numbers, and I'm happy to give more as we engage in this conversation over the course of the next two weeks.

The Speaker: The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Landowner Property Rights Legislation

Mr. Cooper: Both the Premier and the Government House Leader once fought against heavy-handed bills from the PC government that were a massive overreach and violation of property and privacy rights. The NDP House leader rallied against Bill 36 and its provisions, which centralized excessive powers into the hands of cabinet. Today the worst part of Bill 36 remains intact, with no suggestion from the government about amendments. Does the Premier still believe that it's wrong to give cabinet heavy-handed powers that trample the property and privacy rights of Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we recently had a conversation in this House about fearmongering. The opposition is taking language that has appeared in government legislation provincially and federally for years, and they are suggesting that we

invented it to create a new right that, quite honestly, doesn't exist. If that's not fearmongering, I really don't know what is.

Mr. Cooper: We know that the NDP once launched petitions promising the full repeal of offensive laws like the old bills 19 and 24, that go too far in infringing on the rights of Albertans, but it seems that their principles have changed since they've taken power. Their commitment to property rights is wavering as they fail to put in any plan or vision to strengthen landowner rights for Albertans. Surely, the Premier would agree that any legislation that gives the government the right to enter virtually any property without a warrant is a step too far for any government.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, interesting that the member opposite talks about "any government." This type of clause exists in revenue legislation throughout the country, provincially and federally. Indeed, it exists in the very revenue-collecting legislation that the government, which the member opposite's leader was a part of, amended in 2006. Yet when the federal Conservative government amended that piece of legislation, that had exactly the same kinds of clauses in it, they never touched it, not a peep, not a change, because this is standard in revenue-collecting legislation across the country. So if it was okay for the Conservative government, why is it not okay here in Alberta?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Cooper: This is the exact type of clause that you used to rally against.

The fact is that the NDP have introduced legislation that makes significant infringements on privacy and property rights of Albertans. The language the government is putting forward is something that no Albertan should support. They will want changes to any law that allows the government to go onto their land or check their computer without the protection of the courts. The expense of the carbon tax was bad enough. Will the Premier admit this type of overreach and scrap any provision in any law, including the one she mentioned, that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's really clear that the members opposite need to do better research. I would suggest that Google is helpful. I might refer the member to the Wildlife Act in Saskatchewan, where it also grants the government the right to enter land, and interestingly Saskatchewan is also not known as a police-friendly state. This kind of clause exists in revenue enforcement legislation across the country, and these guys are fearmongering over something that nobody else would believe is a concern.

Mr. Mason: A point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order noted by the Government House Leader.

I would remind you again, please, members, to keep the volume down.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Chief Medical Examiner confirmed that a man who overdosed earlier this year had heroin, fentanyl, and W-18 in his system. This is the first overdose linked to the extremely toxic W-18 here in Alberta. These powerful

opioids of all types are streaming into our province and taking more lives every day while the NDP government struggles to even identify, measure, and track the problem. Why can't the minister provide a clear picture of deaths by opioid type, including oxycodone, hydrocodone, and heroin?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our hearts go out to any families or individuals who are impacted by death in a drug addiction or an overdose. Certainly, it's very heartbreaking. I do want to clarify that W-18 was present; it wasn't necessarily the cause. There was some overstepping initially on the assumptions there. When there are a number of different substances, opioids or otherwise, in somebody's system, there are great complexities. Certainly, I think it's important for us to identify what substances were present, but to be able to draw a conclusion between using one substance when many were used . . .

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. Last year the government boasted that it created a fentanyl response team to address this growing crisis. Since then the overdose rate has continued unchecked. The fentanyl response team meets just once a month and has no dedicated resources. The response team is now being lumped in with other groups implementing the mental health review recommendations. The opioid problem gripping Alberta needs a dedicated and highly prioritized response. How long will it take for your government to respond with the full commitment and urgency that this crisis demands?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we do take these deaths very seriously. That's one of the reasons why we worked immediately to create the fentanyl response team and to launch a mental health and addictions review. We're proud of the work that happened there, and certainly we'll continue to work with the chief medical officer in ensuring our surveillance of drug-related deaths and that we continue to have increased oversight so that we can as Albertans work collaboratively to make sure that we address this. I am proud of the work that's happening across departments, across Alberta Health Services as well as with law enforcement.

Mr. Barnes: Opioids are a serious and pressing problem, but I have to wonder what else is falling through the cracks as the NDP still tries to get their feet underneath them. Last week it was reported in Medicine Hat that meth accounts for roughly half of all drug seizures, spiking from just 10 per cent a year ago. Given the province's slow and ineffective response to opioids it concerns me that we could be losing control of other street drugs as well. When will we see a co-ordinated, credible, and effective response to drug abuse in Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we know that different drugs can be challenges at different times and in different locations. That's why we work so closely with our partners in Health to ensure that we're increasing resources for drug addiction treatment across the board and to ensure that we're providing additional resources to ALERT. We just increased their funding so that they can follow

crime where it goes and they can follow the drugs where they are a problem in different areas of the province. We're very proud of the work that we're doing, and it's really important to keep the commitment to front-line services that this government has demonstrated.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The leader of the third party.

Education Achievement Testing

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, reports by the Calgary board of education on grade 6 math provincial achievement tests show that 90 per cent of CBE schools in one quadrant of Calgary, for example, are below the provincial average. To the Education minister: are you aware of these results, and what are you doing to support teachers and students to address this alarming trend in many areas of Alberta?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the ministry and the minister do monitor provincial achievement test results very closely. The number one thing that happened with this government when we were elected to make sure that we were supporting teachers and students was that we actually funded the growth in enrolment across Alberta. That resulted in 1,100 teachers in classrooms as well as 800 educational assistants, who were likely to lose their jobs, being maintained and about 260 more being hired. Certainly, having the right resources in the classroom is going to help.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you for that.

Last September the Education minister, Mr. Speaker, publicly acknowledged the concerns about low math scores when the issue was raised by the Calgary Association of Parents and School Councils, CAPSC. The minister agreed that dollars reaching the classroom was an issue that the minister would address. With a whole school year behind us since that happened, to the minister: what have you done to get a higher percentage of the approved education dollars into the classroom?

Ms Hoffman: Unlike the plan that was put forward by the previous government, anticipated by the Official Opposition, our government is providing stable funding for education to keep our commitment to fully fund education enrolment. Certainly, that is a very big part of what we're doing, working to have appropriate oversight in collaboration with school boards – they are orders of government, Mr. Speaker – and making sure that they continue to find ways to put those resources in the classroom. There's also a curriculum department that is working on reviewing curriculum continuously, including the math curriculum.

Mr. McIver: Well, here I am talking about kids, and the minister is just throwing stones.

Mr. Speaker, parents through CAPSC have expressed concern that they have no method of knowing if their individual child is at grade level. CAPSC has suggested to the minister a set of 40 math questions, for example, for each grade that a child could answer for their parent so the parent could see if they're at grade level. Just one example. To the minister: when will you provide for parents a method that they could use at home to make sure that their own children are at grade level since parents are the primary caregivers and educators?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we want every child to get the supports that they need to be successful in life. That's one of the reasons why we put in place teacher supports and resources; we've clarified expectations for basic numeracy; we're working with postsecondary institutions to improve training for new teachers; and why it's so important for parents and schools to have an ongoing collaboration, including school conferences that are set up. But I have to reinforce how important it is to actually have teachers in the classroom, and that's why, instead of moving forward with rash cuts that were proposed by that very party, we reinvested in education, put money in the schools so that adults can be working with the kids to help them and their families.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Climate Leadership Plan

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The climate change leadership plan has introduced another Alberta agency, this one with a laudable purpose: energy efficiency, demand reduction. This agency with undetermined staff or budget is at the sole discretion of the minister of environment. The environment ministry has now consolidated measurement, monitoring, enforcement, new program development, and significant financial resources under one ministry. To the Premier: can the Premier explain why she will not require that appointments to this new energy efficiency agency be merit based and an independent panel?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have every intention of ensuring that the people that are appointed to the energy efficiency board are absolutely appointed on the basis of merit. You know, they'll be the kind of people who, for instance, believe that climate change is real. They will also be very committed to improving energy efficiency, taking Alberta from being the last province in the country without an energy efficiency program to being a leader in the country with the energy efficiency program. So I look forward to it. I'm very excited about the many opportunities and the growth opportunities that we will enjoy as a result of that.

Dr. Swann: To the environment minister, then: what performance indicators will her ministry be monitoring? That is, how will the ministry know if we're conserving energy?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question. Thank you to the hon. member for that thoughtful question. You know, I think there will be a number of different metrics: in particular, uptake from individuals; the kinds of programming; the kind of emission reductions that we see from individuals, from small businesses, from institutions like schools, hospitals, and others. Certainly, the emission reduction and cost reduction will be some of our metrics that we will be using, and we'll make sure that we're making the right evidence-based decisions on what kinds of programming are available to homeowners and to others.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, again to the minister: on what basis did the ministry decide to give rebates to middle-income earners, who earn up to a hundred thousand dollars a year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, you know, we received some advice from the climate leadership plan, from Dr. Leach's panel last fall that indicated that approximately two-thirds of Albertans – that would be a good benchmark in terms of insulating folks from the extra costs and ensuring that they are rebated back the average amount so that if and when they do reduce their emissions through availing themselves of the programming that will be available through the energy efficiency agency, programming that, of course, our friends in the Official Opposition would cancel and cut. Once they can do that, then more of that cash will be kept in their pocket. We think we've achieved the right balance there in terms of protecting families and also ensuring that we're reducing emissions.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister
The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Employment Skills Training

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The steep drop in the world price of oil has caused tough economic times in Alberta. This downturn is not only hurting families and employers in my constituency but, broadly speaking, Alberta's labour force as well. Under Alberta's jobs plan funding for skills training through the Canada-Alberta job grant has increased this fiscal year. To the Minister of Labour: why is the federal government important, and how will this funding be used to help Albertans get through these tough times?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Skills training is one of the best investments we can make to ensure we have a strong and diversified economy. The Canada-Alberta job grant helps employers to train current or potential employees so that Albertans are equipped with the skills that they need to participate in the workforce. Employers use this funding to hire third-party training providers, which lowers their training costs during these tough times, while workers benefit from programs that boost their skills and abilities in their current or future workplace.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Mr. Speaker, given that skills training is a priority in this downturn and given that our government is delivering this funding, again to the same minister: what qualifications do employers need to meet in order to access this funding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This program is available to private and not-for-profit sector employees of all different sizes across the province and, for the first time, First Nations and Métis settlements as well. Crown corporations will also be eligible for the grant if they are an employer in a community with a population of 100,000 or less. Minimum requirements for training to be eligible include: is the training 21 hours or over in length; is it delivered by a third-party training provider; does it result in a credential such as a record of completion, certificate, grade, et cetera; and is it completed within a year?

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that some members of this Legislature were clearly far more interested in announcing skills funding than delivering it, again to the Minister of Labour: can the minister clarify our responsibilities to the federal government on announcing the Canada-Alberta job grant funding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The announcement guidelines in the agreement show that we will work towards six joint announcements with the federal government. Our government has been in contact with the federal government, and all parties are in agreement that the first priority is delivering this funding to the Alberta employers and workers who need it. I want to be clear. We will live up to this agreement, and I certainly encourage all members of the House to stay tuned as we highlight this funding with multiple announcements throughout the summer.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would remind you again about preambles on supplementaries.

Machinery, Equipment, and Linear Property Taxes

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we received new information on linear taxation. The Premier said that the government would be putting in place a new regime to oversee the distribution of linear assessment, which would lead to better solutions. This would appear to seriously contradict the Minister of Municipal Affairs' responses over the past several months. She has said that, quote, linear dollars will be staying in rural Alberta, unquote. To the Premier: will you set the record straight? What is your clear and exact plan for linear taxation?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the opportunity to clarify that in no way did the conversation that was engaged with the Premier yesterday contradict anything that I have ever said. Linear taxation will continue to remain in rural Alberta. There will be no change in that. There will be no collection of linear taxes from rural Alberta going to the cities. I've said that before. I will say it again. It's absolutely on the record. It's not being pooled. It's not being delivered to the cities. Once again can I say that it's not going to the cities.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's exactly what was asked, nor was it asked of that individual.

Given that on linear assessment municipalities have heard nothing but unsubstantiated platitudes and innuendo from the minister in charge and given that at the AUMA and the AAMD and C conventions in the fall the minister said that there will be no redistribution of linear assessment from rural Alberta to the city of Calgary or the city of Edmonton or any other city, Minister, once again: will there or will there not be any changes to the assessment, collection, allocation and/or distribution . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that what the member is attempting to do is to have me reveal to the Legislature what the outcome is of the Municipal Government Act review and what the legislation is going to be. I look forward to providing those details to you very soon, and we can at that time have those conversations. However, I will continue to state for the record that any changes that may be coming to linear assessment will be about

maintaining the health and well-being of communities outside the cities within this province.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, more platitudes, more innuendo.

Given that the Premier and her ministers have been saying one thing in the Legislature and another thing at the municipal conventions, let's clear up confusion on another important issue for rural municipalities, that being machinery and equipment taxes. Minister, will you give us a clear and honest answer at this time? What is the government's official position on the assessment, collection, allocation, and distribution of machinery and equipment taxes, please?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I will say that what I say to my stakeholders and what I say in the House all come from the very same place of honesty and integrity in terms of my respect for my municipal partners. I will continue to stand by that, that the outcome of the MGA review and what we present here will in no way contradict the work that I have been engaging in with my stakeholders. I look forward to those conversations with them, as I always do with my stakeholders, that I respect very much.

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

Opioid Use

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Alberta Health Services announced that 69 Albertans had died from fentanyl in the first three months of this year, it became crystal clear that this crisis is not subsiding. Five weeks ago B.C. declared a public health emergency because its opioid-related deaths are escalating, yet Alberta has refused to take the same measure. To the Health minister. Your government has taken my advice about funding ALERT, making naloxone more widely available, and regulating pill presses. Will you now accept more of my advice and declare this a public health crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. To echo the statements from the Minister of Health, our hearts really do go out to the families and communities dealing with the heartbreak and tragedy of drug addiction. We have been listening to our health officials, and they are saying that we do not need to take the step of a public health emergency. They have access to all of the resources and the tools that they need to address this concern. Other provinces have different legislation and need to declare a public health emergency simply to give their public health officers the tools that our officers already have today.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta's internal data collection is likely different from B.C.'s and that declaring a public health crisis might make no difference on a strictly administrative level but given that there are other reasons for declaring a public health crisis such as raising more public awareness about the serious hazard, again to the Health minister: how can creating more awareness about a crisis ever be considered unnecessary?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our team is working very hard around the awareness issue with a number of public information campaigns, including the drugsfool.ca campaign as well as others that we're developing in

partnership with our partners in law enforcement. To be clear, in Alberta under Alberta's Public Health Act a public health emergency grants the Minister of Health and chief medical officer extraordinary powers designed to specifically stop a major outbreak of a communicable disease, including quarantining people against their wishes, seizing private property, entering into private homes without a warrant, and even conscription of Albertans into service. We do not believe that that is an appropriate . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. We're not talking about incarcerating people; we're just trying to make them more aware.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government acknowledges the seriousness of fentanyl and W-18 as a problem and given that the public wants certainty that its government will create a comprehensive strategy for dealing with this crisis and given the effectiveness of the Mental Health Review Committee, which was created to offer advice to the Health minister, to the same minister: will you establish a similar opioid abuse advisory committee to deal with this health crisis?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As the member mentioned, the mental health review panel did examine this problem of addictions and made a number of recommendations specifically related to opioid addiction. In addition to the work that we've done out of that, we're also working very closely with our indigenous partners to create an opioid strategy, particularly for our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. All of the recommendations are in the mental health review, and we have teams responsible for implementing six priority recommendations of the review. I look forward to continuing to work with the member opposite as we take real action on this issue.

2:20

Carbon Levy (continued)

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, last week marked Gas Tax Honesty Day in Alberta. Since the election of the NDP gas taxes at the pump have gone from 9 cents per litre to 13 cents. Now the ND PST carbon tax will compound this to 17 cents a litre. Come January 2018, those taxes will equal 19 cents a litre on gasoline alone, costing the average family of four \$888 a year on gas taxes annually, double the years before. Does the Minister of Finance believe his promised carbon tax rebate will come anywhere close to compensating families for this tax grab?

Ms Phillips: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, middle- and low-income Albertans will receive a rebate of their average use, which, of course, was a calculation arrived at from Statistics Canada and other sources. You know, the fact of the matter here is that we will be using these revenues to reinvest fully in the Alberta economy and move Alberta forward. That is why the climate leadership plan is so broadly supported. It leaves Alberta as the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada, but what it also does is that it ensures new markets for our products. It cleans up our air and water. It ensures that we're doing the right thing.

Mr. Fildebrandt: The carbon tax is highway robbery that'll fund only corporate welfare, Mr. Speaker.

Given that truckers are now paying 13 cents per litre for diesel and will be paying 21 cents come 2018 and that most of our imports are distributed by trucks, that will pass these costs on to consumers, causing groceries and other sundry goods to rise, and given that the margins made by owner-operator truckers are slim and getting slimmer, putting truckers out of work – there is no rebate whatsoever for our truckers – how can the Minister of Finance claim that his ND PST carbon tax is revenue neutral for our truckers?

The Speaker: The minister of the environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the opposition's approach is to not tell the truth about the carbon levy and the cost to both consumers and others. It is a fact that the indirect costs of which they speak are wildly inflated and are simply misrepresenting reality. That is why our approach is to reinvest in the economy, reinvest in efficiency, and have an honest conversation about climate change.

Mr. Fildebrandt: The truth hurts, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the NDP keeps calling its carbon tax a levy for some reason – on page 22 of the budget there is a table that shows the revenue coming into the provincial government from personal income tax, corporate income tax, education property tax, other taxes, and something called a carbon levy – and given, Mr. Speaker, that the title of this table, for the benefit of the minister, reads Tax Revenue, can the Minister of Finance confirm that I am reading the title of the table correctly?

Mr. Ceci: You know, we have done great work through the presentation of the budget, and we'll continue to do great work on behalf of Albertans. We have many things in that budget, many things that are identified. We will correctly label everything that we need to label. There are no errata coming. We have done the best job for Albertans, which that party and that party wouldn't have done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Seniors' Issues

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government is leaving municipalities in the lurch as they look for predictable and sustainable funding for affordable housing. As budgets tighten for our municipalities, they're looking to the provincial government to lead on how to best address this affordable housing crisis crunch. Given that Edmonton is considering slashing its affordable housing budget in half by 2018 and that according to the mayor, quote, council shouldn't renew that funding until it knows how much the provincial and federal governments will contribute, end quote, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing. Cities and municipalities desire a long-term plan for funding. Will you provide them with one?

The Speaker: The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Unlike previous governments, our government is investing \$1.2 billion over five years in seniors' lodges and housing. We're investing \$582 million to support major replacement and renewal of existing social housing and seniors' housing. We're very proud. Our

government is stepping up and doing things, and we're working with municipalities to make that happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Yao: Given that municipalities are looking for innovative ways to develop affordable housing, including that Edmonton is considering building seniors' affordable housing on top of new schools, recreation centres, or other city buildings, and given that these changes would require input from Alberta Education as well as legislative changes, what is this government's position on these proposed innovative social housing models?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. We're working with municipalities and housing management bodies, and we're focusing right now on shovel-ready projects. There are lots of innovative projects that already have been presented to government, and these investments will move Alberta forward and create jobs locally. Unlike the opposition, who wants to turn back the clock, calling for reckless cuts, we're very proud of stepping up and working with our municipal partners.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, I've talked to a lot of seniors, gotten a lot of feedback about how important paper documents are to them. Given that moving to online registration and driver's licence renewals has been thrust upon those very same seniors and given that there can be stiff fines and penalties for those who don't have access to or are unsure how to use this technology, will this NDP government exempt seniors from the online registry system, or will this government simply tell seniors to get with the times?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker, although I'm not sure why the member opposite thinks that that is supplemental to the other questions he's asked. Nevertheless, I'm happy to inform the member opposite in this House again that seniors over 70 will be receiving their renewal reminder one last time to let them know on that reminder that they need to sign up online. I'm happy to inform the House as many times as the member needs me to do so. Again, please sign up online, please go to Service Alberta, get your renewal reminder online.

Thank you.

Premier's Office Issues Management Unit

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, this government has a zest for issues management, so much so that they spent a cool million bucks staffing an issues management team even though they already have press secretaries to do that very job in each ministry. Now, I have spent many years listening to the folks across the aisle criticizing our government for having layers of bureaucracy and political staff, and now they're doing the same thing themselves. Can the Premier tell me why she hired press secretaries that she has so little trust in then needed to spend an extra million bucks to get the job done?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm a little surprised that the question is coming from a member who's been part of government. Premiers' offices do have issues management regularly. This is not atypical. The number of political staff in the Premier's office is on par with the number of staff in the Premier's office under the last party, just before the last election. It's that we've aligned them in certain ways to make sure that we have

seamless integration. For example, some of our issues managers are supporting the response to the Fort McMurray wildfires to make sure that there is seamless multiministry integration.

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, given that most of the hires to this million-dollar team are former NDP staffers from British Columbia and Manitoba, it must have seemed like the Oprah show over there at the Legislature: you get a job, you get a job. Everyone gets a job except if you're an Alberta communications professional. Then you don't. Again to the Premier: when you said that you had a jobs plan, you didn't tell us that it was a Manitoba jobs plan.

2:30

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, let's remember what that party was saying right before the last election: you're going to get fired, public servant; you're going to get fired, public servant. Are you kidding me? You were going to cut a billion dollars from health care, multiple millions of dollars from Human Services, Education. Give me a break. News flash: when New Democrats hire, they want to hire people who understand New Democrat world views to help manage the government. [interjections] We had excellent people from all across the country, including Albertans, hired into that area. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Second supplemental question.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now we know that we're on track with the Manitoba jobs plan.

Given that I earned my master's only a few years ago specializing in issues management, I know a lot of folks in this province who would have been delighted and eminently qualified to do this work. In fact, I have binders of communications professionals . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, get to the question.

Ms Jansen: . . . binders of them, that would have loved this job. Why doesn't the Premier want Albertans to have these jobs?

Ms Hoffman: I'm very proud that we have hired the best people in the country, including many Albertans, to be a part of this area as well as other areas within government. What's unusual is that the previous government also had issues management, but it was housed in the public service. Mr. Speaker, that to me is not clear, transparent, or respectful. Our staff structure may be different, but the number of political staff is comparable to what was under Prentice, and it's less than previous PC governments. Our structure is the same as one that existed under Prime Minister Harper as well as one that exists in other Conservative governments right now and, I believe, under Premier Pallister as well. We're very proud of the team we have. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Indigenous Relations

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's indigenous people bring a long history of cultural practices, traditions, and health methods that differ greatly from nonindigenous Albertans. I'm grateful that our government supports traditional indigenous culture. Given the unique issues faced by indigenous people in Alberta, to the Minister of Health: what is this government doing to support the health of indigenous people?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Certainly, when you look at the health outcomes for indigenous and nonindigenous Albertans, it is an area where we as Albertans have a great deal of work to do to close that gap. In keeping with our government's commitment to strengthen relationships with indigenous people, we're partnering with First Nations communities, with their elected officials as well as those who are off-reserve, living in urban centres, to ensure that the range of health care services, including mental health supports, supporting addictions treatment and diabetes care, are well funded moving forward and well supported. Our goal is to reduce the disparity in health outcomes of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indigenous culture in Alberta is unique and includes the use of traditional healing methods. However, given that these unique programs are often costly and therefore limited and inaccessible for those struggling with addictions, to the Minister of Health: what is this government doing to support people seeking traditional healing methods to manage mental health and serious addictions?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our government respects the traditions of indigenous cultural practices, and Alberta Health Services' aboriginal health program develops, supports, and delivers culturally sensitive programming and services to aboriginal people. There certainly is more work that needs to be done in this area, and one way we can do it is by partnering with organizations that are working on the ground such as the Poundmaker's Lodge, that has a very strong reputation and is in the member's home riding. Additionally, indigenous leaders have provided direct input on the Valuing Mental Health report and the Fentanyl Response Team, and they are now providing guidance into the work we're doing around the implementation of those pieces as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my second supplemental to the Minister of Indigenous Relations. Given this government's commitment to addressing the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at a provincial level, what is this government doing to support these recommendations in real time?

The Speaker: The Justice minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the past year our government has apologized for not taking a stand against the residential school system, has joined the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and has begun work on the implementation of the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. In addition, the current minister and I have worked very hard at building a new relationship with the indigenous people in our province and in the member's very own riding. I'd like to applaud St. Albert for its recent announcement of a new healing garden in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 11, 2016, in question period, when being questioned about the Springbank off-stream dry reservoir, the Minister of Transportation stated, "We're currently in the process of talking to the landowners about acquiring their land." Yet the minister also referenced the ongoing four-season environmental impact assessment. One of the government's arguments in favour of choosing Springbank over McLean Creek was the claim that Springbank would have less environmental impact. Can the minister tell us how the government knows that there will be a lower environmental impact if the study hasn't been completed yet?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A study was done before the selection of the Springbank site, and the study found that spawning would have been disrupted in McLean Creek for the bull trout, that it was a migration area for grizzly bears, that there were a number of other species that were potentially seriously impacted by McLean Creek. Compared to the Springbank site, it had a far greater environmental impact, particularly on various wildlife species.

Mr. van Dijken: Given that the Springbank off-stream reservoir is not designed to protect the communities of Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows in case of a flood and given that both the Wildrose and the NDP supported the McLean Creek site during the election but the NDP has since broken their campaign promise – something has changed the government's mind even before the environmental assessment on Springbank is completed – to the Minister of Transportation: what is the government not telling us, and will these other communities be protected?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Well, you know, if the hon. member would just check the capital plan, he would find out that there was significant – I think it's \$30 million for flood protection for Bragg Creek, an additional \$6 million to \$8 million for protection of Redwood Meadows. It's in the budget, Mr. Speaker. We just passed it.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that it's possible the government will not be able to negotiate agreements with certain Springbank landowners and will have to invoke the Expropriation Act and given that the Minister of Transportation indicated in a Global television interview that the government is looking to get the best possible deal and given that just yesterday the minister stood and defended due process and compensation, will the minister commit that if land is expropriated, property rights will be fully protected and full, fair value for the lands will be given as compensation?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Expropriation Act provides completely fair and adequate recourse for landowners to ensure that they get fair market value for their land. We're prepared to pay that but no more.

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

Health Services for Immigrants and Their Children

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Any and all individuals in Alberta should have access to the highest level of publicly funded medical care. You would think that anyone born in Alberta would automatically receive this option. However, if a child is born in Alberta to parents who do not have resident status and are awaiting paperwork, that child is not entitled to Alberta health care. To the Minister of Health: this issue was raised within my constituency, and I'm wondering what we can do to fix this unfortunate and unfair loophole.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Certainly, according to our governing bodies, including the legislation that we pass here in the House, all Canadians have access to Canadian health care, so if there's a specific instance, that member could follow up with my office. If the child is a Canadian, certainly we'd be happy to follow up on that and make sure that they get the right health care services that they need.

Thank you.

2:40

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that individuals immigrate to Alberta from all over the world and given that when they do so, they often bring with them cultural differences and language concerns and given that in health care the relationship and understanding between a doctor and their patient is paramount to successful diagnosis and treatment, again to the minister: can you please outline for the House the steps that are being taken to improve cultural understanding and competencies within Alberta health care?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. We'd be happy to arrange some follow-up opportunities to do some work if individuals in your office who are supporting your constituents on casework would like more information. Certainly, we have a translational phone line. We have work that's happening in Alberta Health Services both around newcomers as well as indigenous Albertans. There is much more work that needs to be done, but certainly being able to communicate in your first language and making sure that you're able to articulate what you're experiencing is number one as well as offering respect to anyone who walks through those doors.

Thank you for the question.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that mental health issues are serious concerns for all Albertans and given that some immigrants who arrive in Alberta bring with them from their home countries mental health concerns for various reasons and given that stigmas still exist about mental health awareness in some cultures and countries, again to the minister: can you outline for the House specific programs in place which seek to increase the uptake of recent immigrants exploring and utilizing all mental health supports available to them?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker and to the member for asking it. Certainly, this is an area of priority for our government and something that we're very proud to be moving forward on. In terms of specific pieces I'd be happy to table something in the House that gets to the level of detail that I think the member is asking for so that all members might be able to have access to some outlines and be able to share it with their constituents.

The Speaker: Hon. members, as requested, there's a supplemental answer by the Government House Leader from yesterday, I believe.

Landowner and Leaseholder Rights

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was asked a question by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat in connection to Bill 36, and I said at that time that Bill 36 had not been proclaimed.* That is incorrect. Bill 36 has been proclaimed. It has, however, been amended in many of its most egregious features by Bill 10 in 2011.

The Speaker: A response?

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for taking the time and the effort to clarify that. I greatly appreciate it.

I can't help but bring my thoughts back to when we shared opposition together in 2012, and we both spoke so strongly against Bill 36 and what the previous government had done to cause thousands and thousands of landowners, people who had been on their land for four and five generations, to actually rally and express such great concerns. I'm hoping that you thought it hadn't been proclaimed because deep down your government still intends to actually strike Bill 36 and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Do you have another response?

Mr. Mason: Yeah. Thanks very much, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we did take a strong stand in connection to some of the legislation of the previous government, including Bill 36. I believe that this is really an issue about surface rights access. Mr. Speaker, we've always stood for the rights of landowners. We believe in due process, proper notification, and fair compensation if, in fact, land is required for legitimate public services. We're currently reviewing how the government approaches surface rights and the liabilities that flow from oil and gas development. It's important we have a process for dealing with compensation and disputes . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

In 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Vivo Recreation Complex and Sue Scott

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Calgary-Northern Hills there is a nontraditional recreational organization that has helped shape the personality of a community. This organization evolved while a young, newly built community expanded. Together, both have defined Calgary's northern edge.

*See page 1090, right column, paragraph 7

In late 1996 the Nose Creek Sports and Recreation Association was formed as a not-for-profit organization to spearhead the development of a community-oriented recreation complex. Community leaders and volunteers came together with the city to discuss the diverse social needs of the residents of north-central Calgary. They envisioned a multipurpose recreational centre that would provide opportunities for recreation, leisure, active wellness, and positive social interaction for every generation in the community.

Well in advance of the facility's grand opening they were seeking a general manager, and Sue Scott was an ideal fit. Sue had been involved with recreation for most of her life, beginning in her early days as a day camp leader. She earned a BA in recreation administration at the U of A in 1981 and later worked at the Lindsay Park Sports centre.

Cardel place opened in 2004, and from day one the facility had a strong social impact and has been financially self-sustainable. Sue has described the experience as opening, launching, and learning. Five years later the board of directors explored how the organization would evolve, and Sue was there to guide the why in that evolution.

In 2015 Cardel place was renamed Vivo for Healthier Generations. Vivo comes from Latin, meaning to live, and it reflects the new philosophy of the organization. The new name embodies the charity's mission and its commitment to helping individuals live their best life.

As of February 1, having led Vivo for nearly 14 years of growth and success, Sue Scott retired from her position as CEO, or more accurately worded, she has graduated to a life of play. In fact, she has already been appointed the CPO, which is the chief play officer, by her colleagues.

I wish Sue well in the future. In the words of its guiding principles: Vivo is a positive, encouraging, all-inclusive and inspiring place.

Thank you, Sue Scott . . .

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

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Multiple Sclerosis

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is World Multiple Sclerosis Day, also known as MS day. The hon. Minister of Advanced Education talked about this while introducing six distinguished guests from the local MS Society.

Mr. Speaker, for the past few years I have cycled for the MS Society with some 2,000 supporters, braving weather, wind, fatigue, sore muscles, from Leduc to Camrose and back, all to raise funds for the MS Society through the Johnson MS Bike Tour. These cyclists come from different backgrounds, including many living with MS and their friends and families. These people are my heroes. MS affects your balance, your vision, your mobility, and your strength. On the second day, as the wind gets stronger and the path goes uphill, the journey gets tougher. It is a tough ride, especially for people with MS. Crossing the finish line is not only a fundraising success but, also, a victory of the spirit of perseverance.

Mr. Speaker, this year's MS day theme is to explore how people diagnosed with MS can explore independence. This can be a challenging step. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I have worked with a number of families whose adult daughter or son suffers from MS. These parents face the dilemma and challenges of allowing independence while also supporting and advocating for their children's MS-related needs. I am thankful to the MS Society for the support that they provide to people living with MS and to their relatives.

Mr. Speaker, our country has one of the highest MS rates. Our chance of being diagnosed with MS is 13 times more than the French and 278 times more than the Pakistanis.

Mr. Speaker, this Sunday is the Jayman Built MS Walk in Edmonton through which the MS Society hopes to raise funds to continue their much-needed research for advocacy and to deliver crucial programs and services.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

2:50 Pipeline Approval

Mr. MacIntyre: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have finally received long-overdue recognition of something that Wildrose has continuously highlighted over the last several months. The Alberta NDP took a \$3 billion carbon tax gamble, and they are losing. This government has asked Alberta's taxpayers to buy a multibillion-dollar international oil and gas industry its social licence, that the NDP have arbitrarily deemed the missing ingredient in pipeline approval, that it needs to gain access to tidewater.

As Albertans ready themselves to start paying this tax, the antipipeline, anti-Alberta lobby groups have only ramped up efforts to see Alberta fail to obtain desperately needed market access. In scathing breakdowns a former Alberta minister and the media have detailed the actions taken to prevent Alberta from obtaining new export pipelines in spite of our new, costly carbon tax. The Council of Canadians, Greenpeace Canada, and 60 other environmental groups called on the NEB to suspend the Energy East application process, calling it "a complete fiasco."

Just months after these ill-informed groups rejected the NEB's processes, which, by the way, have resulted in the highest regulatory standards in the world for pipelines, 70 environmental NGOs announced their opposition to any new pipelines. Later that week Montreal's mayor and 30 other municipal officials professed their opposition to Energy East. B.C.'s Premier has declared her continued opposition to Kinder Morgan, and Ontario's Premier recently rejected Alberta natural gas. Then the NDP's own national party members, of course, have voted in favour of the Leap Manifesto right in our own backyard. So where exactly is this social licence?

This government has placed the burden of buying social licence on the backs of Alberta taxpayers. This is clearly not the answer, and neither is it working. The answer is to support the findings of the NEB on key infrastructure projects. If the government is serious about market access . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(5) of the Election Act I would like to table five copies of the following: the report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the September 3, 2015, by-election in Calgary-Foothills and the March 22, 2016, by-election in Calgary-Greenway. Copies of this report will be provided to all members.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of an online campaign started by a

constituent of mine in Edmonton-McClung, June Acorn, asking Alberta Infrastructure to save the Alberta museum building in old Glenora. As of printing, the site had attracted 5,244 digital signatures from around the world.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe there was a point of order that was raised earlier. The Government House Leader.

Point of Order Anticipation

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rose on a point of order. There were a number of questions from members opposite in connection with Bill 20, and I rose in order to just draw to the Speaker's attention Standing Order 23(e).

23 A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member

- (e) anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day.

I would note that Bill 20 is indeed on the Order Paper for today, and many questions from the opposite side were directly related to the contents of that bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to the point of order today. I think that often in this place when politics breaks out, there is a bit of a track record of there being two different versions of the facts, one that the Government House Leader believes to be true and one that I actually know is true. Perhaps that was a bit unfair.

I do have just a couple of quick comments with respect to anticipation. The question that was asked by the Official Opposition House Leader spoke to government policy around legislation that included things like Bill 36, that the Government House Leader rose to speak to, and included things like bills 19 and 24. The question specifically related to the Premier and if the Premier would admit this is an overreach and scrap any provision in any law which tramples property and privacy rights. While the question may have been regarding government policy, it certainly wasn't specific to a clause in any bill.

I think there are a number of rulings on anticipation, including one on November 19, when you, sir, said:

I also would point out that the questions posed were not dealing with the specific clauses of the bill, and the practice in this Assembly is that the rule against anticipation is not violated by a question about government policy in relation to a bill that is up for consideration that day.

I recall you saying wise words at that time. I would again comment on the wise words of yourself, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the rule of anticipation.

These questions were clearly not out of order. It's my guesstimate that the Government House Leader's efforts are to rule all of the tough questions out of order that they wouldn't like to answer during question period as anticipation. In fact, if we look at the lengthy list of bills that are still on the Order Paper, it would be hard to find a question that we might be able to ask.

In this case, because it was not on a specific clause of the bill, I would suggest that you will find in your research that, in fact, this was not out of order and was not anticipation.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, it's my belief that clause 23(e), that the Government House Leader correctly read out, on anticipation – I've always believed that the intention of that was for items before they're introduced in the House, when they're on the Order Paper.

At any rate, what the Official Opposition House Leader said remains true. The question actually didn't refer to a specific bill. It asked in generic terms about government positions that would take a specific viewpoint. I don't remember the hon. member mentioning that particular one that's on the Order Paper today in any event.

The Speaker: Any other members?

I think I'd like to defer on this item.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 19

Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act

[Debate adjourned May 25]

The Speaker: Is there anyone wishing to speak to this?
Is there a member who would like to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a second time]

3:00 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 15

An Act to End Predatory Lending

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Chair. As cosponsor of Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending, it is a vital step to strengthening consumer protection within the payday loans industry. Currently payday lenders in Alberta rank amongst the second-highest rates in the country. Our ministry resolves to protect vulnerable Albertans from the exploitive rates on payday loans, contributing to the cycle of poverty. We recognize the trials that Albertans are currently experiencing, and Bill 15 will regulate the resources that they need without having to experience outrageous interest rates.

Madam Chair, our first step to understanding the vicious cycle that predatory lending can initiate was to engage stakeholder consultation. From October to December 2015 the government of Alberta reached out to Albertans to actively listen to their voices regarding payday lending regulations. The announcement regarding more responsible regulation was received very positively. We recognize the importance of this service and are moving to provide a more fiscally responsible resolution.

Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Lois Mitchell spoke of pursuing "a coherent and effective economic development strategy" in her Speech from the Throne on March 8, 2016. The current practice of payday lending percentage rates does not resonate as responsible, and we have the opportunity to bridge the gaps for those Albertans who are desperately in need of help. In her throne

speech Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor spoke of the fact that Albertans need a government that will stand up for them when they are vulnerable.

To end these abuses, my government has introduced An Act to End Predatory Lending. As stated, Albertan payday lenders are charging the second-highest rates, and that translates into percentages as high as an annual percentage rate of 600. For repeat users, this exploitive rate encourages poverty, and we are committed to creating pathways out of poverty for those trapped in the vicious cycle of debt.

Madam Chair, we listened to over 1,400 Albertans, and this government is serious about protecting our consumers. We believe that well-informed consumers are in a far better position to make well-informed decisions that benefit them and their families. Some Albertans are trapped in the cycle of debt because they may not understand the complexities of payday loans. Some Albertans underestimate the impact of this high-cost borrowing approach, or they do not realize that there may be better alternatives available. Bill 15 addresses these concerns specifically.

Madam Chair, our government has listened to Albertans' concerns, and we recognize the need for short-term financial resolutions for those in need. We are reaching out to the lenders within federal governance to support viable answers. I am proud that both First Calgary Financial and Servus Credit Union have made a commitment to provide these short-term resources and make them available this year.

The impact of these predatory rates has been responded to with consultation amongst Albertan stakeholders, to work together to find the answers that our most vulnerable need. The introduction of Bill 15 could not respond more sensibly right now. With the precarious economy and in light of the recent wildfires, Albertans need a government that is going to provide options they can work with.

In 2009, when Alberta introduced its payday lending regulations, it lacked the conscience required to protect those using the services. It legislated the cost of borrowing per \$100 at \$23. Short-term loans are not expressed as an annual percentage rate due to their duration. When they are, Madam Chair, they translate to 600 per cent. The very nature of predatory lending makes our vulnerable the prey of circumstances.

I ask: how can we provide better options for better decisions for our Albertans at such a critical time? I am so very pleased that collectively we have drafted sound changes to provide Albertans with help rather than hinder their current economic challenges. Our draft proposals include items that maintain the accessibility of short-term loans. By reducing the fee per \$100 borrowed from \$23 to \$15, we alleviate a substantial burden on borrowers, with a significant reduction in the APR. This will bring us from the second-highest rate in Canada to par with the lowest, and that, Madam Chair, is fiscal responsibility.

By mandating instalments, we can reduce the rollover loan occurrence. This will give people the opportunity to pay off smaller amounts so that the constraint they feel from rapid repayment is also drastically diminished. Rollover occurs when repayment in full hampers an individual's ability to maintain their current expenses with the reduction in expendable income. When we bring these measures together with the commitment from First Calgary Financial and Servus Credit Union to establish short-term credit options and financial literacy information requirements from our payday lenders, we balance the need for short-term loans with strong advocacy.

Madam Chair, I want to thank the Service Alberta ministry for opening their ears to the dialogue Albertans shared regarding

predatory lending. The current practice provides the opportunity to bridge the gaps for those Albertans who are desperately in need of help.

Our proposed Bill 15 needs to validate two measures in order to suffice the best interests of our Alberta. Firstly, our changes need to meet the test to protect the vulnerable and reduce inequality in Alberta. Secondly, it needs to fit with the goals of reducing the incidence of poverty. I am confident that together with the input of Albertans we can construct a framework that speaks to a strong social policy framework and meets the needs of our Albertans.

I encourage all in the House to support Bill 15 to put an end to predatory lending. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, amendments? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending. I'm pleased to rise and speak in favour of Bill 15.

This is a very well-intentioned bill that makes a number of very positive steps forward when it comes to assisting Albertans. Certainly, we've seen in this industry a cycle that individuals can fall into and become entrapped in the cycle of payday loans. Perhaps "entrapped" is a bit strong. The challenge is that when they get started, they may not realize the full consequences of the transaction. For the Legislature to be taking some steps on this is, I think, a net positive.

3:10

There are many things in the bill that are moving in the right direction. I think that issues around improving financial literacy are critical to ending the cycle of poverty, and there are certain organizations that are looking to fill a gap of small loans to high-risk borrowers. I think that's a positive step in the right direction. Well, if they are going to do that, perhaps the need for legislation wasn't in place. Typically I like to err on the side of educate, don't legislate, but I think Bill 15 is needed because there are certainly some organizations that wind up taking advantage of people, and it presents a real challenge.

I think that one of the things this bill does is, again, provides the opportunity for financial literacy. Requiring payday lenders to provide financial literacy information I think is a very positive step. However, there is no guarantee that borrowers will take advantage of this information. I think we all have a role to play in the financial literacy of Albertans. The government has a role to play in developing financial literacy programs, tools, publications that promote Albertans' financial literacy or at least provide a vehicle for those that would like to get that information.

Wildrose has long called for an increased focus on financial literacy in Alberta's K to 12 curriculum. I think it is an incredible opportunity that we have for those who have engaged in the school system, be it public or private or separate, a real opportunity to lay in a good foundation, to have students understand the risks and pitfalls that are out there, and it gives students a strong foundation on which to build their future life. So if we can do those things through the vehicles that are available, I think that is positive. Financial literacy around payday loans and other credit, both the benefits of credit and the risk of credit, I think is critically important. I think the opportunity to train and teach around core entrepreneurial principles is also a great opportunity that we have and should make better use of so that at the end of the day we aren't necessarily relying on payday lenders to provide that financial

literacy information. While they also have a part to play, I think we all could do more around this issue.

There are certainly some potential risks with the legislation in limiting avenues by which someone may be able to have access to short-term loans. That does present some potential risks that we should all be aware of. That's not to say that we shouldn't move forward on a piece of legislation like this, but, you know, all pieces of legislation have both intended and unintended consequences, so there are some potential risks around here. I think that the benefits of supporting those who are taken advantage of and get into this very vicious cycle certainly outweigh some of the other unintended consequences, but I think that it's important that it is on our radar and on the government's radar, that we are watching for some of the other potential pitfalls that may exist because of the legislation. Certainly, no one in the House would say that 600 per cent interest is reasonable. This is a real barrier to individuals breaking the cycle of poverty.

I think that we ought to move forward on this piece of legislation. I think that there are a number of positive steps in the right direction. I look forward to seeing how the government is able to engage some other private lenders to ensure that some of the unintended consequences that I spoke about don't become a real, prevalent problem for folks that would have traditionally found themselves inside a store for a payday loan.

I think I'll keep my comments brief today and move forward. This is a positive step in the right direction. There are a few things we need to keep our eyes on as legislators. Certainly, the Minister of Justice may like to do some work around enforcement of some of the unintended consequences. I think that at end of the day this bill is certainly going to do a lot more good than harm, and that's why I'm pleased to support it.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am glad to be able to speak to Bill 15 this day. I know that when this bill was brought to our caucus and I had to sit down and look at it, I saw much to recommend to the people of Alberta in this bill. There are a few things that maybe cause some concern, but I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 15.

I realize that I've lived an incredibly privileged life. I had a mother and a father that loved me a great deal and still do, hopefully.

Mr. Mason: I'm sure they're not New Democrats.

Mr. Smith: Oh, if you only knew my father.

I knew as I was growing up that my parents worked very hard. They took care of me, and they taught me how to work hard. I've been privileged to grow up in a time in Alberta where I've never lacked a job, where I had the skills and the ability to find a job and to keep a job, but that's not the case for all people.

When I look at this bill, I think that we could all say that we have to step outside of ourselves and try to put ourselves in the position of somebody that is maybe less fortunate than ourselves. Poverty is a grinding thing. It's never easy, and it can overwhelm a person. When you're in a downward cycle, when you're struggling with that poverty, with trying to find a job, with trying to figure out where your next meal is going to come from or where you're going to stay for that night, in many ways it's almost overwhelming to the point of hopelessness.

3:20

The other day I was driving away from my office. I usually park in the back, and as I'm going down the alley, I see a pile of stuff and a young lady sitting beside this pile of stuff. I'm busy, and I figure I'll just drive by. I got two-thirds of my vehicle past this young lady, and I stopped. It was cold. I backed up, I rolled down my window, and I said: what's the problem? She said: well, I had a fight with my sister, and she's kicked me out. I said: is this your stuff here? She said: yeah. I said: "Have you got a place to go? Are you waiting for somebody to pick you up? Is there someplace for you to go?" "No. No, I don't know where I'm going to go." I said: "Well, listen; I'm not saying that I can solve all your problems, but I'm the MLA, and my office is two doors down that way. I want you to stop in, and I want you to talk to my assistant, Wendy. I have to go right now, but I want you to stop in and see what we can do. At the end of the day if there's nothing that we can do, I want you to phone my wife, and you can stay with us for the night if that's what needs to happen."

We don't all have the same advantages in life. We understand that. There are times when we can be in a situation where we just don't know how we're going to handle life. As a teacher I always had a huge amount of empathy for the kids in my classroom that came from broken families or came from families that were dysfunctional. I can remember going with my church to the Mustard Seed church in Edmonton and volunteering to serve several meals. I don't know if I've told the House this, but every time that I've gone to serve at the Mustard Seed, I've seen students of mine, at least former students, walk through the line. So you stopped your serving, and you took them aside, and you sat down with them and had a cup of coffee or hot chocolate or whatever, and you'd just say: "How's life going? What are you doing here? Is there anything that I can do to help?" You know, in each case that it's happened – and it's sad. You can't save people from themselves sometimes. You can't save students from themselves sometimes. We all make bad choices sometimes. Whether it was drugs or whether it was a dysfunctional family or they'd moved to Edmonton and things had fallen apart, every time you had to stop and you had to ask them: "Is there anything that I can do? Would a few bucks help? Would you like to come back to Drayton? How is your life going? Is there anything that I can do?" You see, that's what you do when you live in a community.

To a degree I look at this bill, and I see it as part of becoming a community that cares. I look at this bill, and I see that it wants to reduce the borrowing fees. I can see where in a worst-case scenario they can be exorbitant, but I also understand that these payday lenders exist for a reason. Sometimes when you don't have a steady job, when you don't have a steady address, when you don't know how you're going to handle life, when you're suffering from illness, perhaps mental illness, the banks aren't necessarily going to lend you the money that you think you need. Payday lenders meet a need. What we're trying to do here is just ensure that the need of these people isn't taken advantage of.

Payday loan companies can sometimes find themselves in situations where, because of the decisions of the people, they do have to charge them exorbitant rates of interest. In making sure that we take care of that situation, we don't want to put these companies out of business either. They do serve a need, and we want to make sure that one of the consequences of this legislation isn't lowering the interest rates or lowering the rates that payday loan companies can charge so low that we reduce their ability to take on any risk. So we need to find a balance here. I don't know if we've found that balance completely, but I believe that overall this bill tries to find the balance and maybe moves us a little closer to that.

I was reading an article the other day in the newspaper that was saying that even people that are middle income, higher, upper-class income have taken on mortgage debt that is so high that they often will have problems meeting the financial expectations of the month and that this is becoming a concern for the financial institutions, that Canadian debt is becoming too high. While I have concerns about that, I also understand that these people have jobs, that in many cases they have resources that allow them to be able to meet those odd occasions when they have less money at the end of the month than they have bills, that there are times when they can access more income. These people generally have the facility to be able to make wise choices when it comes to their debt load.

The thing that I like about this bill is that it requires lenders to refer borrowers to financial literacy resources. I know that my kids, when they went to university, came to me and said, "Dad, we're going to go get a student loan." I said, "Ah, jeez, guys, do you really need to do that?" "Yeah, Dad, we need to have more money; we need that student loan." "Well, you know, you're 20 years old; you're going to make your own choices in life. But let me tell you that it's certainly a lot harder to pay it off than it is to borrow it." So we had those conversations. You see, at least before they made that decision to go get that student loan, my kids sat down, and we had that conversation.

I'm not sure that sometimes the people that are living in poverty, even if they had that conversation, have the ability to make any other choices. They're desperate. I think it's important that we take the time, that we make sure that they have had the ability to ensure that the choices that they're making are wise choices, that they can try to handle them, that they can see how they can pay those loans off that they make, and that usually it should be, especially for payday loans, a short span before they have to repay that loan.

Overall, while I have some concerns with this bill, I believe that it's going to do the job, that it's going to make some changes that are going to be positive in the lives of Albertans. So I am pleased to be able to say that I speak in favour and that I will support Bill 15.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the bill and continue the debate on Bill 15. I appreciate the words from the gentleman across the aisle and everyone who has spoken so far today. You know, it really is my firm belief that one of the key roles of government is to look out for the most vulnerable and, when necessary, protect them from systems that, whether by design or circumstance, can serve to entrench poverty and vulnerability and that rather than simply tossing them a pair of bootstraps and abandoning them to what can often be the less than tender mercies of the invisible hand, we at times, when it is appropriate, take steps to regulate markets and ensure that individuals are protected. That's why I'm very happy to see this legislation coming forward. I'm very appreciative of the work that's been done by the minister and her staff on this, the consultation that they've had, and what appears to me to be a very thorough plan to address the issue and the challenges surrounding payday loans.

3:30

As has been noted by many who have spoken today, we know that individuals borrowing under payday loan agreements are often subject to very high levels of interest. This bill helps control that. But it also goes beyond just protecting consumers in the immediate

future; it lays the groundwork for more significant changes and protections in the future.

Now, I appreciate the concerns that were raised by the members across the aisle that it's important that we include education; that we consider all of the aspects that are involved with this; that we ensure that when we are making changes to protect individuals and put in place appropriate regulations, we don't have too many unintended consequences; and that we keep a close eye on the effects that this has on the market. That's why I'm very happy to see that in this bill it does require the minister to collect key information from lenders and to report on the status of the payday lending industry and the development of alternative options as this goes forward, and that information will be shared with all members of this House. This is an excellent opportunity, I think, for all of us to be able to keep a close eye on how these pieces come into play, how they affect things, and to be able to make smart and wise decisions on how we move forward. That annual report is going to continue as we move forward.

The act really sets out a clear goal, and that is to create an environment where the cost of borrowing and repayment options help to alleviate some of the struggles that Albertans face. We have some excellent partners in this. Of course, when we go out to do this work as a government, it's extremely important, I think, that we work with both business and community groups to find the solutions that are needed. I'm very pleased to see that this bill is committed to working with credit unions and community groups to develop alternative options. I recently was at an event where I had the opportunity to chat with one of the leaders of Servus Credit Union, who shared with me their excitement to work with our government to create new lower interest options for those in need of short-term loans. As was noted by my colleague from Red Deer-North, First Calgary Financial has also stepped up to provide a short-term microloan program, which they are currently piloting in the city of Calgary.

It's great to see that we have all of these people who are coming together to ensure that we have other options and other opportunities. I think these will go some way towards addressing some of the possible concerns that were raised by some of the members that spoke today to ensure that individuals will still have access to short-term credit when it is needed, when they're in that position, but that it will be available at a significantly less barrier and be far less likely to cause a continued cycle of poverty that could continue to bring people down.

I appreciate the thoughts that were shared by the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon about this bill being part of a community that cares, and I truly believe that's what this is. Albertans are rallying around this legislation and showing their support. It has received high praise from community groups and individuals across the spectrum. It's something that I truly believe all Albertans support and believe that we can find better ways to provide those in need with the supports they need at far less burden and cost to themselves. I agree with the member, of course, that we want to ensure that people's needs are met without them being taken advantage of. That's really what it comes down to. When people are at their most vulnerable, we want to ensure that we provide them with tools and supports that are going to move them forward and not drag them further down into debt.

I'm pleased to see in this legislation that payday lenders will now be prohibited from offering different forms of credit to borrowers that still have payday loans outstanding. It's incredibly important, I think, that we ensure that people are not simply driven further into debt and not taken advantage of when they're in that vulnerable position.

Payday lenders will be specifically prohibited from attempting to process payments before their due dates. Having been in positions before where money has been very tight and I was at near poverty levels, I know what it's like when you get hit with that unexpected NSF charge or some of the other banking things that can happen. This provides further protection to ensure that people who are already short on money aren't losing even more due to unscrupulous practices.

It will also restrict payday lenders from actively soliciting individuals by directly contacting them through mail, phone, over the Internet, or through social media. Again, it's important that we provide the services that people need to help them through these difficult times. At the same time we want to ensure that we're not doing it in a way that pulls people into cycles of debt that they're not prepared for or that they don't fully understand.

I agree with the members that spoke today who noted as well the importance of the bits on financial literacy. Incredibly important. That was a lesson I had to learn myself, too, as a young man. Certainly, growing up, I had to learn how to handle my money, I had to learn how to deal with a credit card, and I had to learn how to look out for myself. You know, I had student loans. I had other things that I had to learn to deal with. It's incredibly important, I agree, that we try to incorporate that as much as possible in our schools but also in these situations where people are in that vulnerable place, that when they go looking for help, they're provided with full and transparent information both about the loans that are available, what effect those can have on them, their full options as part of the spectrum, and also further information about financial literacy to help them best navigate and get themselves into a situation where they don't need to rely on these sorts of supports in the future.

Again, I'd like to thank the minister for bringing this forward. I'd like to thank all the members who have expressed their support. I look forward to voting in favour of Bill 15.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to take a brief moment to really express my support for this piece of legislation. This is something that affects my constituency of Calgary-East a lot. I live in an area of the city where payday lenders have a tendency to cluster, lower income areas. There are maps that show that in my constituency. In the heart of my constituency, 17th Avenue S.E., we have 11 payday lenders on that one street alone, and there are other areas in my riding where they also concentrate. This is something that the 17th Avenue BRZ has been working on for a really long time. They've been working on trying to work with city council to put moratoriums on the number of payday lenders that can exist. I find it hard to believe that payday lenders are not making a lot of money when they have a tendency to proliferate so much.

I just wanted to take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude on my behalf and on behalf of the folks who live in my community who are going to benefit hugely from this piece of legislation, who are going to benefit from additional transparency and additional consumer protection, who are going to be able to access those financial literacy pieces.

We have great organizations. We have spoken about Momentum. Momentum is an organization in my riding that offers microlending programs. Also, Sunrise Community Link is another one that has taken the model from Momentum and uses it to help single women in my riding who are, you know, coming out of homelessness for the first time, helps them to save money and helps them be

financially literate. There are so many groups doing great work, and this is a piece of legislation that will help those groups continue to do great work, continue to provide options for people so that they're not going to get stuck in a cycle of debt, they're not going to get stuck in a cycle of poverty. It's going to benefit folks who live in my community.

I just wanted to take a very brief moment to express my support for this legislation. Calgary-East is thankful for this legislation. I would hope that everyone in this House would vote in favour of this legislation.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 15 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

3:40

Bill 16

Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016. There are a lot of good things in this act. I'm not going to dwell on those. Instead, I want to talk about what is missing here.

One thing I do notice is that we are missing definitions, specifically a definition for transportation network companies. I had a meeting with the taxi industry, and they, too, noted the lack of a definition for transportation network companies in Bill 16. The taxi industry is leery that so much will get shoved into the regulations when it belongs in the legislation. Come to think of it, Madam Chair, the Traffic Safety Act doesn't even have a definition for taxi in the main part. Here Alberta Transportation has set up a potential conflict between TNCs, the transportation network companies, and taxis by not having a definition in the legislation. While a TNC cannot be a taxi, a taxi can be a TNC. Again, it comes down to definitions.

If the definitions had been opened, Wildrose would likely have had amended the definitions to include tow trucks as emergency vehicles. The tow truck industry would very much like this designation to help protect them as they do their dangerous work on the highways. But, alas, we are left hoping that the minister will take this feedback to his department for round 3 of amendments to the Traffic Safety Act on behalf of the tow truck industry.

That being said, the taxi industry is very interested in having a level playing field for TNCs and taxis. The taxi industry is of the opinion that nothing has changed, only the manner of dispatch. TNCs argue, on the other hand, that taxis are different. Taxis get a municipal licence, they are often part of a fleet, their cars are marked so they can pick up strangers on the road, their drivers drive as a career, et cetera.

Wildrose, of course, is cognizant of the need for a level playing field, but we are also cognizant of the need to reduce red tape. When you think about the reality of ride sharing, the ride-sharing technology and that sharing culture, it seems that a lot of these long-

standing rules might be outdated, a lot of the red tape might be outdated and only put into place as a result of lobbying by insiders or political considerations and not genuinely because of safety.

We're all familiar with some of the ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft, but a new development is taking ride sharing to the next level by having carpooling apps. In these cases the driver isn't being paid to drive someone around; the person is just carpooling with the driver. They help to share the costs of a shared trip, not paying for the time of the driver. The driver just happens to be going in the same direction as the passenger, and they are able to come together with this technology to work on that carpooling aspect of it.

This is very obviously not a taxi, but will it get caught up in the same regulations? This is a concern that I would have. The technology continues to evolve over time. I do not believe that we want to have overbearing regulations and government red tape that would get in the way of improving carpooling and of getting fewer vehicles on the road, to start removing some of those vehicles and having the ability for people to carpool in a more efficient manner.

The legislation enables a regulatory framework, and we do need one, however onerous or light it might be. But the bill could be improved by treating TNCs in a separate bill or at least by excluding package delivery, parcel delivery, or carpooling. So I have some amendments to propose along those lines. I have my first amendment here. I should keep one, I guess. Would you like me to wait?

The Chair: Just till I see the original.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment moves that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by striking out sections 3, 9, and 13. Essentially, these are the sections that would be speaking to the transportation network companies. The title of the bill, Traffic Safety Amendment Act – all the other sections in here are essentially amending, repealing, or substituting sections of the existing act. What this amendment would seek to do is to take a look at the sections that are being added to the Traffic Safety Act with regard to transportation network companies. We are adding these sections to the act; we're not amending or repealing or substituting. So section 3 is: "Appeals re administrative penalties re transportation companies." Then section 9 is: "The following is added after section 129" with regard to transportation network companies.

Like I've said before, Madam Chair, the very fact that there is no definition of a transportation network company – this definition isn't in the legislation, nor is the definition of a taxi, so in order to recognize and clarify the distinction between the two, I do believe that, possibly, it would be better that we introduce transportation network company legislation in a separate bill. I believe there are too many loose ends here that will be covered off in regulations. That's left a lot of uncertainty within industry, within the taxi industry and what would be referred to as the ride-sharing industry, as to how far reaching these regulations will be.

This amendment will send the government, essentially, back to do their homework, possibly send it to committee, and ensure that there's more accountability here.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm a little bit surprised by this amendment from the hon. member. It essentially removes any reference to transportation network companies, ride-sharing companies like Uber and so on, from the act. That is certainly not acceptable to me. This has been a considerable amount of work, with discussions with the industry on all sides, to come forward with a workable regulatory framework for this new technology.

The objective, Madam Chair, always has been twofold; first of all, and most importantly, to provide for the safety of the public who are accessing ride-sharing companies. That is fundamental, I think. When you use your app on your phone to contact a ride-sharing company and a driver who you do not know and have never met shows up at your door to take you somewhere and you are going to get into that person's car, you need to know certain things. First of all, you know that it's a legitimate person that's actually working for the ride-sharing company, who has the proper licence so that you can be reasonably assured that the driver is a relatively safe driver; secondly, that the person has no recorded criminal activity, whether it's a record or current charges, that that person is going to be safe for you personally; and, finally, that if you do get into an accident, you're adequately covered by insurance.

3:50

We've not tried to be overly prescriptive. We've not tried to pick winners and losers. We've tried to put in place a level playing field – and that's the second objective, Madam Chair – that allows the market to work, allows for the development of new technology.

What the hon. member is proposing is, essentially, to take out any ability for the government to regulate these ride-sharing companies. Essentially, one of the key functions of this bill is being entirely gutted and removed. So on that basis, Madam Chair, in my view, it's very contrary to the intent of our department, the work that's been done, and of the legislation itself, and I urge all hon. members to defeat this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for clarification, the amendment is coming forward in good spirit and for the fact that we are looking at a completely new way of doing ride sharing and rides for hire. There are a lot of loose ends that come forward in Bill 16, so what the amendment is intended to do is to essentially say: we need a little more detail here. Whether it goes to committee or whatever order it needs to do that, we need to have the taxi industry and the ride-sharing industry have the ability to come before a committee or before government to be sure that all interests are being protected and that we're coming up with sound legislation before regulation is necessary. We don't want to get into a situation where at the decision of Executive Council, the industry is concerned about what direction it goes.

The very fact that we don't even have the definition of what truly is a transportation network company: do we have the fact that the taxis will be included as part of that definition? That's unsure in this legislation.

It's not meant to take the safety aspect or the efforts of the government into question. All it is essentially saying is that possibly there needs to be more work done here.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, that's all well and good. What the amendment actually does, if you look at it, is that it removes the reference to transportation network companies under section 9. In 129.1, that would be added, it

removes the words: “A transportation network company may only operate in accordance with the regulations under this Part.” Section 129.2(1) provides for administrative penalties to enforce the rules that we put in place. Section 129.3 gives the government the power to apply, through the registrar of motor vehicles, for an injunction against a ride-sharing company or a TNC that is in ongoing violation of the regulations. So this takes away any power to enforce the standards that we want to place on them. It actually gives a completely free ride to the TNC because it removes any ability to impose a penalty.

Section 3 would be removed as well. That deals with the right of transportation network companies that are subject to sanctions under the act to appeal to the board. That’s very important. If you impose these penalties, administrative penalties and so on, the people who are penalized have in natural justice a right of appeal. That’s why that’s there.

To take this out removes any ability to enforce anything. I don’t know if that’s the hon. member’s intention, but it can only be of tremendous benefit to a transportation network company like Uber because it allows them to completely ignore any attempts to provide regulations for the public’s safety. I don’t know if that’s the intention of the hon. member, but that is, in fact, the effect.

I will just add that the reason that the definition of TNCs is in the regulations is because the technology is very fast developing, and it is very difficult to put in legislation something that within a couple of years may in fact be inadequate or incomplete. That’s why it’s in regulation.

This is an act or an amendment to an act to allow the regulation of an industry in our province, a transportation industry, to protect public safety. That regulation of industries is not done through legislation. It’s done through administrative processes that are allowed and limited by legislation, and that’s what this is. So to suggest that we regulate through legislation would simply tie this place up in knots. It would be like every time you wanted to change a speed limit on a highway having to come back and get an amendment to the legislation. That’s not how government works, Madam Chair. It just doesn’t work that way.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Just briefly in response to the minister, to imply that having a definition of what a transportation network company might look like is like changing a speed limit is perhaps a bit of a stretch in terms of what regulations should apply and shouldn’t apply.

Now, while the member may disagree with the amendment – that’s totally fine – I think that the intention was that portions of the legislation haven’t hit the mark. I might just say that I appreciate the work that’s been done, and I would suggest, just as many of my colleagues did at second reading when supporting the legislation, that it’s likely that we will continue to support the legislation.

One of the challenges or things that we are working to highlight is that there are some significant gaps, so the member is essentially making a recommendation that would require its own piece of legislation around transportation network companies. By removing that, we would then have that requirement moving forward.

Now, I can appreciate the position of the minister, that he feels that they’ve done enough inside this piece of legislation as it is presented to move forward, but I think highlighting a number of these potential risks and challenges can be very positive and helpful to the overall process.

I accept and recognize that the government and many of their members will choose not to support the amendment, but I think that

some of the intentions of the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock are to try and highlight that we haven’t quite got there yet.

I think, with that, I’ll be pleased to support the amendment, and we can move forward through a couple of other amendments that I think are also important with respect to the overall direction of the legislation.

4:00

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, we’ll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I’d like to move an amendment.

The Chair: This will be amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Madam Chair, I move that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 9 in the proposed section 129.4 (a) by renumbering it as section 129.4(1); (b) by adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), any regulations made under this Part concerning drivers who operate motor vehicles in connection with a transportation network company and the transportation that those drivers provide, shall be applicable only in circumstances where those drivers are accompanied by a passenger using a service offered by the transportation network company.

Essentially, the intent of the amendment is to look towards when the transportation network company is not necessarily transporting a passenger but, rather, a parcel.

The technology, as the minister has said, over time is evolving and improving, and we don’t want to necessarily get in the way of overzealous government regulation prohibiting individuals from being able to transfer and get their parcels from one point to the other. If I’m going from Westlock to Edmonton and can take a parcel that someone was going to have to make a special trip for, having this ability – and some of the apps available now have this ability where they can arrange to have someone take their parcel for them, again taking a vehicle off the road. Using somebody’s technology to effect that action I don’t necessarily believe needs to be regulated.

The technology is giving us the ability to connect and to become more efficient and more effective in the way we run our everyday lives. I do not believe that if I’m going to be transporting a parcel for someone from Westlock to Edmonton, I would necessarily need to have, then, the class 4 licence, a class 5 licence. To drive my pickup truck or my car to Edmonton to deliver a parcel to someone’s granddaughter or the like should not necessarily fall under this legislation. Without a true definition of the transportation network companies there is a possibility that the regulations would potentially prohibit and get in the way of individuals being able to find those efficiencies in how to run their everyday lives.

That’s the intent of the amendment, and I look forward to hearing discussion as to what the government feels is their direction on these types of apps.

Mr. Mason: Madam Chair, I'd just like to get a clarification from the hon. member about the intent. Is it the intent of this particular amendment to exclude transportation network companies that carry packages instead of people from any sort of regulation?

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. That would be correct. Essentially, a transportation network company – because we don't have the definition in the legislation, if they're transporting or helping to move parcels rather than people, are they going to fall under this legislation and then fall under the regulations that will be developed? I would suggest that that would be probably far reaching and overreaching the intent of this bill.

Mr. Mason: Madam Chair, that's what I thought, and I suggest that it's not advisable. It's true that certain regulations that could be made under the act might apply to people carrying persons but aren't necessarily applicable to vehicles on a commercial basis carrying packages or other cargo. But that does not mean that we should not have the authority to regulate those types of companies. There may be other factors that need to be taken into account. For example, insurance might apply in the case of cargo. I'll call it cargo rather than packages. We just don't know what those situations are.

That doesn't mean that we'll have exactly the same regulations for those kinds of operations as we do for operations that carry members of the public. But to exclude it entirely from the possibility of regulation, I think, is particularly risky because we don't know what those consequences are, so I would advise members of the House to vote against this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to provide a little clarification for the minister, again, while he may not support the amendment, the amendment doesn't provide the opportunity for no regulation. It only speaks specifically to "regulations made under this part concerning drivers who operate motor vehicles in connection . . ." So the regulation would be around the driver. For example, a class 4 licence: if you weren't transporting a passenger, which is the requirement in the legislation as it currently reads, that you have to have a class 4 licence, this specific amendment speaks to the regulation of the driver. The licence would be an example of that. Again I say that while he may not support the amendment, to say that it would prevent any regulation is probably a bit of an overstep because that is not what the amendment says. It speaks specifically to the requirements of the driver.

The Chair: Any other speakers wishing to comment on amendment A2?

Seeing none, we'll call the vote.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:09 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hunter	van Dijken
Cooper	Smith	Yao
Cyr	Strankman	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gotfried	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Payne

Carson	Horne	Phillips
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Swann
Drysdale	Mason	Sweet
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Gill	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 39

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: Before we continue, I've had a request for unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests. Is anyone opposed to that request?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Chamber the grade 6 group from Taber Christian school, home to the world's best corn. We have with us Mr. Angermeier and Ms Friesen as the teachers, and we have as parent helpers Dan Peters, Shelley Kooiker, Anna Fehr, Pete Boes, and Corny Peters. Would the teachers, the parents, and the students please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Bill 16

Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

(continued)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment with regard to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016.

The Chair: This will be amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. Amendment A3 will read: moved that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 9 in the proposed section 129.1 by renumbering it as section 129.1(1) and by adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), any regulation under this Part shall include an exclusion from any applicable provision for transportation provided through a transportation network company where a driver will travel to the same destination regardless of whether the driver is accompanied by a passenger using a service offered by a transportation network company on that trip.

Madam Chair, the intent of this amendment is essentially to recognize that carpooling is a way to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and that the technology that is available to us today is very effective in bringing people together and allowing them to recognize, "Is someone going in the same direction to the same

destination that I am?" and possibly putting the people together in the same vehicle as opposed to having to take a separate vehicle.

4:30

Carpooling itself is not a career; it's not even a part-time job. It's just about efficiencies and gaining those efficiencies through carpooling and enabling people to get that done through the technology that is available in today's apps for smart phones. We see in many jurisdictions in the United States, for example, where these technologies are becoming very effective in helping to reduce gridlock, helping to remove vehicles from the road. I look at it from the standpoint of rural Alberta, where we don't necessarily have the ability to have in place the public transportation systems that are available in the urban areas. This is a way where these applications help individuals find a way to get to certain destinations without causing a lot of safety issues.

They don't necessarily pay the driver for the services. They are sharing the cost of a trip. Under these carpool apps people will identify: is anybody going to Edmonton, and can I jump in and help share the costs? Through that, they don't necessarily transfer money by cash, but they are able to pay that through the application.

Carpooling, like I said, is taking cars off the road and helping to reduce gridlock. Carpooling saves the environment and lowers the air pollution. Carpooling, I think everyone in this House can agree, is something we want to encourage and not discourage. The legislation as it's being proposed is possibly forcing commuters to meet taxi standards. Possibly, that will be inhibiting, meaning less uptake and more cars unnecessarily on the road.

My concern with this legislation is that we are moving in a direction that will get in the way of the evolution of these carpooling apps from becoming standard in our everyday life. These carpooling apps that are available can definitely help us to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and even the need for people to have a vehicle if we continue to evolve this industry.

Thank you for that, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any others wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment. We had kind of discussed the concept of carpooling earlier in the discussions on this bill. Of course, we had pointed out with regard to carpooling that if there's a website or an app or simply your neighbour saying that he knows somebody that's going in the same direction, "Yeah, we can all go together in one car, and here's \$5 out of my pocket to help you pay for gas," that this does not address that type of thing. Whether you and your neighbour want to take the same car to go to work because you happen to be close, that's all fine.

What we are talking about, though, is transportation network companies. These are companies that provide a service for a fee. Now, if later on in their evolution they decide to add a carpooling section to their app, there is still be going to be a fee for that service that they're providing. I guess if folks want to choose to pay that same fee because that ride for hire happens to be going roughly in the same direction, that would certainly be up to the customer whether they're using that service. By taking this out, when that service does become available, if it becomes available, we risk not being able to regulate that part of the industry. Therefore, I can't support this amendment.

Like I said, that doesn't necessarily discourage you and your neighbour from carpooling together to go to work just simply because you happen to live and work close by to each other. If you

want to help your neighbour out with \$5 for gas, that's certainly up to you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in relation to the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Decore, I guess that speaks to the nub of the issue here. It's my understanding that this legislation doesn't necessarily do a very good job of defining what is a TNC and what isn't. We need to perhaps clarify with this amendment what we're excluding and what we're not excluding.

You know, my kids would laugh at me here. We have some visitors in the gallery that maybe could understand that some of this grey hair in this beard of mine does represent age, and when it comes to technology, I will be the first to admit that, like maybe some of the others in this House, Moses and I were probably on a first-name basis when we chiselled the Ten Commandments.

An Hon. Member: And parted the sea.

Mr. Smith: And parted the Red Sea, yes.

We have a little age on us. I'm not sure how I would even put an app on my phone to be able to access this kind of a service. I do have to speak perhaps for the younger generation and perhaps for my kids. I have a son right now in this city, in Edmonton, and when I sat down with him on Monday for some lunch and had a chance to see him for the first time in three weeks, all of a sudden my son had some explaining to do because he had this ring in his nose for the first time.

Mr. Cooper: Tattoos are next, and then that'll lead to dancing.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, then dancing. You can understand that for a Baptist like me that's really getting out there, okay?

When I start to talk about technology and my kids, this is the young son that is trying to work his way through university and so has decided to forgo the responsibilities and the cash that is necessary to have a vehicle. That means he's getting up at a quarter after 5 in the morning so that he can take Edmonton's finest public transportation to get to his job. He works for Edmonton parks and rec and makes enough money to, hopefully, by the end of the summer be able to afford to go back to school. Well, this is a young son that would absolutely partake of this service, Madam Chair, if he had that app on his phone and could find three or four other people to share the cost of that ride across the city. Being the good, conservative lad that he is, maybe not socially but fiscally, he is more than able to find a way of saving a buck or two, so this is absolutely a service that I know he would partake in.

I guess if we could clear up some of the confusion in this legislation by ensuring that people understand that this carpooling app, the ability to access this and to carpool and to make it convenient to do that, would be accessible to young people like my son or my daughter, then I would speak in favour of this amendment. I would suggest to all of the younger Members of this Legislative Assembly, who tend to populate the government benches, that this argument and this position that I'm taking here should have appealed to you and should be able to persuade you to the point of view that perhaps this amendment would be, if not in my son's best interests, maybe in all of our best interests for the younger generation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

4:40

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I'm certainly not going to discourage your son from trying to save a few bucks, and I certainly hope he finds a great carpool to go with. Again, he can pass them five bucks, seven bucks, two bucks, whatever helps the driver accomplish that. Terrific.

For now, like you said, we're looking at the transportation network companies that do provide a service for a fee. I suppose we have talked a little bit – you want to see some clarity in the legislation, but the bit of the hang-up with that is that because these companies are so fluid and are constantly changing, if we put some of that stuff in here right now, for all I know, next week they could change something that now gets excluded. Do we now have to tell that company: "Sorry. You can't provide that service because it's not in the legislation, but we'll be back in the House next fall, and maybe we'll have time to talk about it"? By having that ability to make changes rapidly within the regulations, we will be able to help those companies to bring those services forward at a much faster rate but, at the same time, not prevent your son from hooking up with a couple of buddies and getting to work.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I'd just like to elaborate momentarily on some of the concerns of the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock around the definition of a transportation network company. If, in fact, the definition had been included in the legislation, then situations like this may not arise so readily. When we see the potential of a carpooling app or carpooling technology, that is not something that we currently see with ride sharing, which certainly functions more along the lines of what sounds like what a transportation network company is. In fact, a carpooling app is genuinely connecting two people going in the same direction. The lack of a definition prevents clarity and, in turn, potential challenges for people who just want to get to the same location or close to each other.

I know that members on the other side of the House may be surprised that people on this side of the House actually want to get vehicles off the road and actually want to provide methods so that we can have these sort of carpooling activities going on. What it sounds like to me, Madam Chair, is people taking care of people and not government taking care of people, and that is the key difference between a conservative and the other side of the House. We believe that people ought to best be able to take care of people, and many on that side of the House believe that the government is in the best position to take care of people, so there's this chasm between us. But I digress to something not necessarily specific to carpooling.

I am pleased to support this amendment. I encourage all carpool-loving members of the Chamber to also support this amendment so that we can ensure that people who are just wanting to carpool aren't caught up in the regulations of this bill.

The Chair: Any others wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 16? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Yes. I would like to make an amendment, Madam Chair, to Bill 16.

The Chair: This will be amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 9 in the proposed section 129.4 by adding the following after clause (g):

- (g.1) respecting protection for individuals using the services of a transportation network company in the event of an absence of or inadequate insurance coverage;
- (g.2) concerning drivers operating vehicles for transportation network companies who fail to adequately disclose the circumstances of the provision of such services to the insurer of a vehicle and any recourse against such drivers by the insurer.

Madam Chair, first of all, I support Bill 16. We were going over the bill, and we thought that it needs to be made a little bit stronger, you know, for users' safety, Albertans' safety, or for whoever uses these services: ride sharing or TNCs and stuff like that. What it does is that it makes sure that the TNC drivers or the passengers or bystanders are covered by the proper insurance.

What we have right now in Ontario: one, the insurance is 10 hours, and then the second one is, like, 20 hours. If the TNC driver does not report properly to Uber or whoever their service provider is, their insurance is null and void. However, the passenger doesn't know whether the car is insured or not. So this amendment makes sure, gives the TNCs the authority to cancel the Uber driver's licence with their organization, and they have proper insurance all the time. That's the first part.

The second one is for public safety. They can monitor the hours and stuff like that, so every time they go from 20 hours to 20.1 hours, at any given time the drivers and the users are insured, all the time. That's basically what it is.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I do wish the hon. member had shared his amendment with me in advance so that I would have had an opportunity to do my homework with respect to the department officials to ensure that there's not any unanticipated problem with it. I can't personally see any difficulty with what he's proposing. It adds areas that the act can regulate to protect people who may have been misled by a driver or who may be in a vehicle where there's inadequate insurance. It puts me in a difficult spot because I'm not in a position to be sure that there's not some unanticipated consequence of his amendment. Otherwise, I would be very pleased to consider that.

I wonder, not wanting to throw away what might be a good amendment, if we could adjourn debate and come back to this tomorrow. Is that something that would be acceptable? I really do wish, hon. member, that you had brought this to me in advance because I probably could have just said yes.

4:50

Mr. Gill: You know, hon. minister, actually, I did call your office, but we couldn't . . .

Mr. Mason: Okay.

Mr. Gill: But we're okay for tomorrow. Thank you.

Mr. Mason: I don't know if there's any more discussion.

The Chair: You could just move to adjourn.

Mr. Mason: I have to adjourn debate on the whole thing, right?

The Chair: Yeah. We'd rise and report progress.

Mr. Mason: Therefore, Madam Chair, I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill 16.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Mason: I move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Sweet: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 15. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 16. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? Say no. So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading (continued)

Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of the environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, for second reading.

Last fall our government took Alberta into a new era of responsibility and commitment to addressing climate change. The climate leadership plan makes Alberta part of the solution. It will prepare Alberta for the economy of the future while ensuring we build on our traditional strengths as an energy economy. The world took notice and is watching. The act I table for second reading today will put Alberta's climate leadership plan into action.

There are three parts to Bill 20. The first is schedule 1, which introduces the Climate Leadership Act. The act will implement the carbon levy. The second schedule of the bill creates energy efficiency Alberta, which is a new energy efficiency and community energy system agency. The third schedule amends existing legislation, including the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act and the personal and corporate income tax acts. The amendments ensure that the funds in the climate change and emissions management fund align with the direction of the climate leadership plan. Amendments to the personal and corporate income tax acts will provide the rebates to low- and middle-income Albertans and reduce the small-business corporate income tax rate by 1 percentage point.

I'll now take a closer look at each of these. The first and perhaps the most discussed part of this bill is the Climate Leadership Act, which will implement the carbon levy. The carbon levy does two things. It is an incentive for energy consumers to reduce their own emissions, and it provides the funding that will support Albertans in investing in opportunities to lower their energy costs, develop more diversified energy supplies, and further reduce their emissions. Section 3 of the proposed act specifically sets out that

the carbon levy revenue can only be used to support initiatives or adjustments related to climate change.

Effective January 1, 2017, the carbon levy will apply to all fossil fuels used to produce heat or energy in Alberta that produce carbon emissions. As approved by cabinet, the format and structure for collecting the carbon levy under the Climate Leadership Act is based on Alberta's Fuel Tax Act. Consistent with that act, the carbon levy is generally imposed as high in the fuel distribution or supply chain as is administratively feasible. For example, a refinery will remit the levy to government on fuel sales and then recover the levy from retail gas stations, who recover it from customers. The end result is that the levy will be introduced in the price paid by consumers. For natural gas, natural gas distributors such as ATCO or AltaGas will remit to government and recover it from retail dealers, who will recover it from customers. Fuel distributors that are unable to recover the levy from their customers can receive a refund from the Crown for the carbon levy related to bad debt.

Sections 4 to 13 impose the carbon levy on fuel such as gasoline, diesel, natural gas, locomotive diesel, aviation fuel, natural gas liquids, and coal. The schedule to the act provides the specific rates that apply to each fuel.

Special rules are put in place for interjurisdictional carriers such as railways, commercial trucking companies, and buses. They will pay the levy on how much they use in Alberta instead of on how much was purchased in Alberta, which is consistent with how they are treated under the Fuel Tax Act. Airlines will only be subject to the carbon levy on flights that begin and end in Alberta. Interjurisdictional flights taken for commercial purposes will be exempt from the carbon levy.

Exemptions and the structure to administer those exemptions are outlined in sections 15 and 16. For example, farmers will not pay the levy on marked – dyed or purple – fuel used for farming operations. Other exemptions include fuel used on-site subject to the specified gas emitters regulation to ensure that users are not charged twice for the same emissions, fuel produced and consumed on-site by conventional oil and gas producers until 2023, fuel that is exported from Alberta, and fuel that is used in industrial processes where it is not combusted.

While the act sets out the broad authority for the exemptions, further details on exemptions will be provided for in the regulations. Consistent with the Fuel Tax Act, the regulations will provide the details for the exemption for on-reserve purchases by First Nations. Also, to minimize the amount of carbon levy payments and rebates to the extent possible, transactions where the fuel will not be consumed in Alberta or is primarily sold to exempt users will be exempt at the time the fuel is moved or purchased.

Other sections of the Climate Leadership Act provide authority to issue rebates as identified in the regulation or outline credits for the use of biomethane, prohibitions on the sale or use of fuel and on the possession of marked fuel.

The carbon levy's administrative provisions generally replicate those of the Fuel Tax Act but are updated for references, ministerial powers, and regulation-making authorities.

The second part of the Climate Leadership Implementation Act establishes a public agency to promote, design, and deliver programs for energy efficiency and conservation. It will also focus on the development of micro- and community-scale energy systems. The new agency, called energy efficiency Alberta, will raise awareness through education and outreach. It will promote an energy efficiency industry through energy audits, incentives, and financing programs, and it will support energy system development.

Under our proposed legislation the agency will develop programs to help Albertans reduce their energy costs and emissions by entering into and carrying out agreements with other agencies or

governments, collaborating with public and private partners, working with enterprises and institutions to deliver and promote efficiency training programs, and designing and delivering financial incentive programs to support the adoption of energy efficiency, microgeneration, and community energy systems in Alberta.

The government will continue to provide leadership by setting the policy direction and establishing regulations, codes, and standards. The minister will direct the agency on specific items such as performance metrics. Government will also retain accountability for the agency by setting targets and reporting progress. The agency will operate in accordance with the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act and the guidelines and directions of the public agency secretariat.

5:00

Undeniably, Energy Efficiency Alberta will follow the outcomes of our review of the province's agencies, boards, and commissions. Additionally, every year the agency will submit a business plan for the minister's review and input, and the minister will review the agency's annual reports and audited financial statements as will the public.

As I previously indicated, the third schedule amends existing legislation, including the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, and the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. While the carbon levy is one of the most efficient ways to achieve Alberta's reductions in emissions, we understand that there are some impacts to businesses and households, and that is why we are taking steps to protect lower and middle-income Albertans and help small businesses adjust to the carbon price.

The Climate Leadership Implementation Act also amends the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act to enact the climate leadership rebate. The rebate will help offset the higher costs for lower and middle-income Albertans as 60 per cent of Alberta households will receive the adjustment rebate, and another 6 per cent will receive a partial rebate. The rebates will begin in 2017 and will be worth up to \$200 for an adult, \$100 for a spouse, and \$30 for each child, to a maximum of four. Single parents will be able to claim the spousal amount for one child and the child amount for up to four additional children.

In 2018, when the carbon price rises to \$30 per tonne, the rebate amounts will also rise to \$300 for one adult, \$150 for a spouse, and \$45 for each child. The rebate will begin to be phased out at \$47,500 in net income for singles and \$95,000 in family net income for couples and families.

The legislation also amends the Alberta Corporate Tax Act to implement the reduction to the small-business corporate income tax rate from 3 per cent to 2 per cent on January 1, 2017.

Also in schedule 3 are some proposed amendments to the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. Right now the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act is basically the province's only tool to address climate change. It establishes the administrative framework and authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in the province.

CCEMA, the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, established the climate change and emissions management fund. The fund, established some years ago by the previous government, receives compliance payments from our large industrial emitters under the specified gas emitters regulation. It also stipulates that the fund only be invested in purposes related to reduction or climate change adaptation but in a narrower manner than what is before the House today.

Our climate leadership plan makes significant advances to Alberta's existing climate policy framework. That means the fund

needs more flexibility in how and where the revenue can be invested. One tool in our approach to reducing emissions and adapting to climate change is to provide Albertans with climate-specific information. In this way they will be better equipped to make decisions about where their energy comes from and how they use it. Under our proposed changes the fund will allow investments in outreach, education, and partnerships such as with the Alberta Energy Regulator. As well, the fund will be able to be used to implement the climate leadership plan.

The amendments under our new legislation maintain the fund's existing purposes for spending and add authority to fund expenses and other entities tasked with supporting the implementation of the climate leadership plan. This will allow funds to be used for the Alberta climate change office and for other departments and agencies, and funds can be used to support Alberta government partnerships with other governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector.

Madam Speaker, Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, sets a new bar for environmental responsibility in Alberta. The act is about our future. It is about the quality of the air we breathe, the climate that supports our economy and our quality of life, the innovation and results and jobs that will drive our prosperity. It's about ensuring our economy is resilient for a carbon-constrained future.

Madam Speaker, a word, I think, here in second reading and upon consideration of this bill on the divisive language and rancour that appears to have seized the political right on this continent and in this province in particular on the matter of this bill. I have heard this bill described as an assault on Albertans, as an anti-Albertan plan, as we heard this afternoon. Just today the climate leadership plan, a document authored by Dr. Andrew Leach, a distinguished economist and leading academic at the University of Alberta, was described as anti-Albertan by one of the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

Madam Speaker, here is a list of other supporters of the climate leadership plan, that folks believe is anti-Albertan: Canadian Natural Resources, Devon Energy, ConocoPhillips, Suncor, Cenovus Energy, ARC Financial, AltaLink, Total, Statoil, the Cement Association of Canada, BluEarth Renewables, the Mining Association of Canada, Co-operators insurance, GE Canada, ATCO, the thermal association of Canada, working people representing heat and frost insulators, the mayor of Edmonton, the mayors of Banff and Canmore, the grand chief of Treaty 6. Are all of these supporters of the climate leadership plan anti-Albertan? We do not believe so, and it is, in fact, a great vituperation and a great injustice to describe all of these groups as anti-Albertan, as if we do not all, everyone in this House, care about the future of this province.

I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that we should not let the rancour that appears to have seized south of the border take hold here in Alberta as we debate these important matters of how we ensure that an energy economy like Alberta's is prepared for the economy of the future. Because these objections, rooted as they are in divisive rhetoric, that serves no one, really have in their root an assumption that we ought to do nothing on climate change.

What does that confine us to? It confines this province to a boom-and-bust economy, with no plan to diversify. With the climate leadership plan we are diversifying our economy and creating jobs. It confines us to not telling the truth about climate change or about the specific effects of the carbon levy. Instead, what we could do is to take that levy and all of that work and invest it back into our economy and ensure that we are putting Albertans to work.

Madam Speaker, doing nothing ensures that we are landlocked forever. What this plan will do is to ensure new markets for our

product. Doing nothing on climate change means more dangerous pollution, but this plan will ensure for our children that we have cleaner air and water. Doing nothing on climate change means that we don't care and that we are in denial about what the future holds for this planet and for this province.

Madam Speaker, this government and this side of the House are doing the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 20, the carbon tax on everything. This carbon tax is something that comes with very poor timing as the world's and the Albertan economies suffer, especially within the energy industry.

To give this House a quick refresher on the economic outlook, I'd like to provide you a lengthy summary from your own fiscal plan. On page 61, titled *Low Oil Prices Prolong Downturn*, your document states:

The Alberta economy is experiencing a severe oil price shock. Oil prices have fallen more than 70% since June 2014, one of the largest declines on record. As a result, the downturn will be deeper and longer than previously expected. After contracting in 2015, real GDP is forecast to decline again in 2016 by 1.4%. Nominal GDP, a broad income measure, is forecast to fall by \$57 billion between 2014 and 2016 and not return to pre-recession levels until 2019. The large income shock and softening outlook for oil prices mean that the recovery is forecast to be weak compared to past downturns . . .

Business investment is expected to decline again this year. Weakness in the energy sector is feeding through the economy, causing activity to slow in many other sectors, including construction and manufacturing. As companies reduce costs, the labour market is expected to deteriorate further, leading to a decline in migration. Households are responding by cutting back on spending.

5:10

In every single ministry – Tourism, Seniors, Human Services, Service Alberta, et cetera, et cetera – they list the low price of oil and the current economy as the strategic risk, yet now, when it comes to implementing its risky and ideological agenda, the economy and the fact that everyday Albertans are making less money or have lost their jobs is irrelevant.

Madam Speaker, families will see a 50 per cent increase, on the Alberta side, of taxes on gasoline. As many of my colleagues have stated, this is inevitably going to affect the bottom line of Alberta families. On average it is estimated that the typical family will be paying about \$1,000 more a year. The government claims that this will be fully offset with a tax credit of \$400. One only needs to do the math to figure out that this is going to cost everyone more. They claim the scheme they have concocted will address the problem they're creating, but the truth is that they seem to not have an understanding of the economy or how much they care about it. They don't seem to be able to make the painfully obvious connections that this will affect the cost of transportation, which is passed on to the grocery stores and every other type of goods that we buy. Albertans will bear the costs on almost every commodity, good, or service.

This cute language of a "carbon levy" isn't fooling anyone because, as everyone knows, this is a tax. It is important that this government use this terminology openly and honestly when talking with Albertans because we're talking about transparency and accountability. However, Madam Speaker, this government has a history of not being very good at talking or consultation. No. This

NDP government operates on its own manifesto, regardless or sometimes in spite of facts or reason.

In my portfolio of Seniors and Housing my stakeholders are turning to me to get answers on what the government's plans are to address the rising costs associated with providing social housing. Transportation, heat, electricity are some of the costs. When Wildrose questioned the minister in estimates on whether or not they had a plan, you can guess the answer: spin, rhetoric, and no answers. They either don't know the answers or they're too embarrassed to admit that their plans will actually negatively impact seniors and social housing facilities.

Many people are wondering how the NDP can force a program on Albertans without having any real research on the effects that this will have more broadly. Any good government would want to ensure their policies and legislation are going to have the outcome they intend. However, no such assessments or precautions have been taken by this government, most likely because they are counter to their agenda. Why has this government not conducted any market assessment? If it has, why has it not provided it to us in this Assembly in order to ensure a proper, thoughtful debate? I suspect, Madam Speaker, it's because any report conducted or any study produced will tell them exactly what their own fiscal plan is telling them: now is not the time to implement their risky and ideological carbon tax on everything.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak on this government's Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. This bill is commonly referred to by many as the carbon tax, and let's be perfectly clear that it is a tax. In fact, the definition of the word "tax" in the *Oxford* dictionary is as follows. As a noun: "a compulsory contribution to state revenue, levied" – interesting word – "by the government on workers' income and business profits, or added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions." Synonyms include duty, tariff, excise, dues, levy, toll, tithe, or fee.

This government insists on calling it a carbon levy, which, as the definition previous shows, is a synonym for tax. Let's just say, for the sake of argument, that it is a levy, the definition of which is, as a verb, to impose a tax, fee, or fine or, as a noun, an act of levying a tax, fee, or fine. They're simply wordsmithing to make a burdensome tax sound like it isn't a tax. At the end of the day, all costs ultimately are borne by us, the taxpayer. Calling it a levy is devious at best, but what can we expect from a government who states that this carbon tax is revenue neutral?

The Premier in her speech announcing the tax said:

We will put every penny raised through the carbon price to work here in Alberta – building our economy, creating jobs, and doubling down on efforts to reduce pollution and promote greater efficiency.

The Alberta carbon price will therefore be revenue-neutral, fully recycled back into the Alberta economy.

To that end, revenue will be reinvested directly into measures to reduce pollution – including clean research and technology; green infrastructure like public transit; to help finance the transition to renewable energy; and efficiency programs to help people reduce their energy use.

However, as economist Trevor Tombe noted in an article he wrote in November for *Maclean's*:

If by revenue-neutral she means they aren't going to toss the carbon tax revenue into the ocean but are instead going to spend the money on stuff, then okay. But the phrase "revenue neutral"

rightly means total government revenue will be unchanged. (How could it mean otherwise?) That is, a carbon tax is revenue neutral if what's levied by the government is fully offset by reductions in other taxes elsewhere. This is basically what B.C. did with their carbon tax. They report annually in their budget how much came in from the carbon tax and how much went out through lower taxes, so it's all above-board.

He went on to say:

The Alberta carbon tax plan is not revenue neutral – not at all. Nothing in the report today suggests any existing tax will be lowered. Of course, that's a valid position to take, but the government shouldn't try to mislead people by misusing the phrase "revenue neutral" – it should advocate clearly for the policies it prefers, and let people decide.

If we want to see an example of a revenue neutral carbon tax, we have only to look to B.C., where their carbon tax now funds more than a billion dollars a year in other tax cuts, resulting in one of Canada's lowest corporate tax rates. As an aside, in B.C. by law the Finance minister is required to take a 15 per cent pay cut if the tax isn't revenue neutral for the government. Isn't it a shame we couldn't use that particular law to keep our Finance minister from breaking the debt ceiling law? Oh, that's right. I guess the minister doesn't even want a debt ceiling, so I guess that wouldn't apply.

Now, on April 19 the Member for Calgary-Currie said this in talking about the carbon tax:

Part of that is our carbon levy. What that levy does is that it allows every cent of it to be reinvested in the form of a rebate back to lower income Albertans . . .

Now, did you hear that? Every penny will be reinvested in the form of a rebate to lower income Albertans. Now, we could take that on its face value, but he goes on to say:

. . . and it also involves us to help diversify our economy by investing in energy efficiency programs, investing in alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, geothermal, and possibly other energy sources that we have yet to think of.

Just think of it. They haven't even thought of all the different things that they can do.

Now, herein lies the problem with NDP budgeting, I believe. You see, he said that every penny goes to rebates to low-income Albertans and also that money goes to help diversify the economy, investing in alternative energy sources. Madam Speaker, that's the problem with NDP finances. It's no wonder they can't get Alberta's finances in order and have to remove the debt ceiling, run massive deficits, bring burdensome debt and damaging interest payments. It appears that they are spending the same money two or three times over. Of course, that leads to some serious problems, to say the least.

5:20

Now that we have established what this bill is and what it is not despite the government's spin, let's get to the nuts and bolts of this. We are in an economic downturn bordering on a recession. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans are unemployed. Costs are increasing while real estate prices and economic growth decrease. This tax will hurt Albertans at a time when they can least afford it. Albertans have already been burdened with increases to business and personal taxes. Now this carbon tax is going to hit them with increases to the price of gasoline, diesel, and the cost of living.

This government's carbon tax will punish everyday families and businesses and will make life in Alberta significantly more expensive. Everything from driving your car to buying groceries to heating your home and shop will be more expensive, and 40 per cent of Albertans will see no sort of offset to these costs. The rebate was originally designed to cover increases in natural gas rates,

gasoline, and diesel but ignored the fact that this tax will have a domino effect, hiking prices on everything from electricity to groceries, rent, and any good or service. And these extra costs will be absorbed by the taxpayer, the end user.

Despite the assurances by the minister of environment the other day that rebates are a little higher to help low-income Albertans deal with the cost passed on to them by businesses for goods and services, the government failed to bring up these extra costs before Wildrose started pointing them out. It's almost as if they hadn't considered it. Of course, had a proper economic impact assessment been done, perhaps Albertans could have been given a true idea of how much this tax will really cost. The government maintains that lower income folks use less energy and that they would actually come out ahead. Madam Speaker, that's hard to quantify without a proper economic assessment.

If costs go up, there are only a few ways in which to pay the piper; either increase prices, or increase fees. Rebate amounts are based only on the direct costs of heat and fuel, not all the other costs. The NDP's rebate scheme was only designed to cover increased natural gas and fuel costs. It ignores the fact that the carbon tax will hike costs on everything. Even families that get the maximum rebate will be on the hook for up to \$400 a year in additional carbon tax costs. Furthermore, I remain deeply skeptical of the NDP's rebate scheme. We were told that these rebate amounts were calculated based only on direct costs of heat and fuel, not all the other costs. They ignore the fact that the carbon tax will hike costs on everything.

The *Canadian Tax Journal* did some analysis about the carbon tax. If it was national, it estimated that a \$30-per-tonne carbon tax would send consumer costs for electricity up 7.5 per cent, costs for food up 2 per cent, and costs for shelter up 1.9 per cent. If you apply these increases to household expenditures from 2014, it becomes clear that families will be facing hundreds of dollars more in indirect costs than the government would like to admit.

Remember that this government's fiscal management has recently caused another credit downgrade, that will cost Albertans more as borrowing rates increase. These credit downgrades show that the financial marketplace has no confidence in this government's fiscal plan. This government likes to put the blame on the price of oil. Unfortunately, the facts don't support that. You see, the price of oil has been steadily increasing since the middle of January. Since mid-January the price of oil has increased about 50 per cent. Since then, the Alberta government has received more downgrades.

These indirect costs will come from many quarters, Madam Speaker. Municipalities, school boards, health centres will all need to find ways to offset the unanticipated costs of this carbon tax. One would think that the taxicabs and transit, which lower income people rely heavily upon, would have to increase prices to compensate. People are starting to realize how much this is going to impact them. One local municipality has estimated that gasoline will increase by \$25,000 in 2017, diesel by \$50,000, and natural gas by \$120,000. It gets even worse in 2018, with those costs jumping to \$35,000 for gasoline, \$75,000 for diesel, and natural gas a whopping \$185,000. This is close to an increase of a third between 2017 and 2018.

This is all consistent with what Mayor Nenshi stated in an April 16 article from the *Calgary Metro*. He states that a carbon tax isn't going to fly.

The City of Calgary fills many, many, many tanks of gas every single day. Our best estimate is that not being rebated the carbon tax on all those tanks . . . that we fill every day, the first year in 2017 will be about \$2.6 or \$2.7 million, rising to \$6.5 million . . .

To put that in context, that's a half point increase on the property tax – only for paying another order of government its taxes.

Nenshi went on to say:

Unlike the provincial government, the city does not, cannot and will not run a deficit . . . Our goal would be to shave that amount somewhere else, but that's hard to do on fuel. Police cars, fire trucks, garbage trucks and buses have to be out there, so as a result the only thing to do is go to the taxpayer for it.

Yes, it seems that this government's solution to their inability to cut waste and bloat is to constantly tax Albertans. Wildrose have always maintained that we will not raise your taxes. The same has never been true of this government. This carbon tax will just be a further economic drain upon Albertans. A typical family will find itself out a thousand dollars every year once this punitive tax is levied. Based on the analysis from the *Canadian Tax Journal* that I mentioned earlier, it is realistic to estimate that a typical family will find itself out at least a thousand dollars every year once it's up and running.

Madam Speaker, this carbon tax is as flawed as any bill this government has put forth. It was not well thought out. The government failed to provide any economic impact assessment, and despite assertions by the government, it is in no way revenue neutral. This policy leaves the Alberta energy sector with a distinct disadvantage in competitiveness on the world market. It's simply another burden on the back of taxpayers at a time they can ill afford it. I cannot and will not support this tax that punishes Albertans for simply going about their daily lives.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) applies. Do you wish to ask a question of the hon. member?

Mr. Cyr: I do.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the member. I enjoyed your speech. I'd like to hear a little bit more about the fact that this bill just received first reading yesterday and we're already into second reading on this. How much time have you spent reviewing this bill, and how are you going to prepare going forward? Now, the reason I'm asking this question to the member, who is the shadow minister of environment, is that we're looking at about \$3 billion – \$3 billion – worth of money being brought in by this bill, which is a staggering amount of money coming in. Now, with the normal estimates, or the normal time when we go through budgets, we actually go through a time frame where we're able to look at a business plan, look at financial statements, and question the minister on exactly where that minister is going to take that money and utilize it for Albertans, how we are going to be responsible for that money.

To the member: is it possible with what we've been given, with just – what? – 30 pages, 50 pages, whatever it is . . .

Mr. Loewen: Ninety-five pages.

Mr. Cyr: Ninety-five pages. As the shadow minister of environment is it possible to take that information this quick and actually, I guess, be able to have a direction for all Albertans to see that we're going in the right or the wrong direction? From what I've heard from you, with the limited amount of time that you've had with that bill, you're already seeing that there are problems with this legislation. Do you feel that it is appropriate to be in second reading in just over 24 hours with this bill?

5:30

Mr. Loewen: Well, thank you to the member for the question. Of course, it is a little disconcerting to think that the government gave us this bill yesterday, and we're in second reading. I was actually up till 1 o'clock in the morning, and I was back up at 5 again this morning working on this. And, yes, this government seems to want to pound things through. Of course, anything that doesn't fit this government's ideology, well, they study it. They take time, they send it to committee, they do all sorts of things, Madam Speaker. But anything that fits their ideology, they pound it through as fast as they can. They don't consult. They don't ask anything. They just pound it through. It was a lot of information to have to go through.

Like I say, this shouldn't be the way business is done. This government committed to doing things differently than the previous government when it came to pushing things through like this, but, no, they've fallen into the same trap. I guess when you become government, maybe you become a little bit arrogant or something, and you think that you should be able to just do whatever you want to do at your schedule and to heck with everybody else, but that's not right, Madam Speaker.

There are a lot of problems with this bill. The problem that I'm seeing is that this affects every part of Albertans' lives, not just the families. It affects the schools, it affects the hospitals, and it affects the cities and the counties. Everything in our world requires fuel to produce or to transport. Of course, you're well aware, Madam Speaker, of the distances we drive in the north and the costs that this will increase. This government since it came into power has implemented two sets of gas tax increases and now this carbon tax on top of it all. That's a very big burden for Albertan families. Of course, like you're aware, in the north we travel greater distances. We have to. That's just part of living in the north. But there's no way that we should be punished for that.

Now, of course, a lot of people think that we live in this oil-rich environment, so why do we have to pay so much for the gasoline? Well, of course, the oil sells at the world market price. There's not much we can do about that. The only thing we can do for our people here in Alberta is to reduce the taxes on the fuel so that we actually have an advantage to living right on this resource here. But what does this government do? It increases the taxes higher and higher, and that's just not right, Madam Speaker. We have other ways to collect revenue. This government has no problem collecting taxes.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to address Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I want to start by saying that I think we're going to have to forgive Albertans for their shock and their discomfort when it comes to this bill.

It's my belief, Madam Speaker, that the results of the last election had less to do with the platforms of the individual parties, mine included, than with being a statement on the governance and the attitude of the Progressive Conservative Party after 44 years of rule. I believe that Albertans were speaking clearly that it was time for a change, and in many cases they were looking for the individual that could most likely replace the Progressive Conservative candidate.

The argument that has been proffered by the government at times in this House, that they were elected on their platform policies, has a modicum of truth to it, but only a modicum. The greater truth, I believe, lies in the fact that the people, the people of Alberta, were looking for an alternative to a Progressive Conservative Party that had betrayed the trust of the people. They were looking to see who had the best opportunity or chance of defeating the Progressive Conservative candidate in that particular riding, and whoever

managed to convey that was the individual that was elected. I believe that was the case in my riding, and I believe that it is also the best explanation for the vast majority of the people that have a seat in this Legislature today.

Too often the NDP government tries to sell the idea that they were elected on their platform and their policies and that therefore there is a legitimacy to the bills they have brought forward into this Legislature. But even if you buy that argument, it doesn't explain and it doesn't justify the actions of this government when they have placed before this House Bill 20. This government never campaigned on a climate leadership plan. Never, Madam Speaker, in the last election did the people of Alberta have the opportunity to judge this party and to decide whether the people of Alberta would be willing to cast their votes for the NDP candidate that was running in their constituency based on their desire to see the implementation of a carbon tax or a climate leadership plan.

I suppose it would be one thing if this government could actually look the people of Alberta in the eye and say: "We campaigned on this. We placed this before the people. We offered you this option. You knew what you were buying." But they didn't. So the people of Alberta are just now beginning to wake up to the fact that this economic time bomb that Bill 20 is going to turn out to be is going to have serious ramifications for their personal lifestyles. It's going to have serious ramifications for the viability of many of their jobs. It's going to negatively impact the ability of many families to take care of their loved ones.

During trying economic times this NDP government has made decision after decision that has hurt the economy of Alberta. There is hardly an industry that has not lost jobs or been economically imperilled by the increased taxes, the dangerous borrowing, and the out-of-control spending of this government.

This bill is not some minor piece of legislation that will hardly impact the people of Alberta. If that was the case, I wouldn't be bringing this argument before this Legislature. Instead, it has been trumpeted by the government as a major piece of legislation. By your own actions and by your own words you understood just how important an impact this legislation will have on the province of Alberta.

5:40

Now, Albertans understand, and my argument would be, that not every piece of legislation that is passed in a Legislature, in a democracy is necessarily campaigned on. We understand that, you understand that, Albertans understand that, and the people that are sitting in this Legislature understand that. But when legislation, Madam Speaker, is considered in the House that is going to have a major impact on the lives of the people of this province, when it is brought before this House, in a democracy the bill must have some legitimacy behind it. The idea is that legislation should have had the ability to be vetted by the people during the general election period. That's one of the purposes of a general election. It's for the political parties to place before the people the ideas and the policies that they will pursue should they be elected. This is something that you did not do, and it affects the very legitimacy of this bill.

We have many examples, Madam Speaker, of governments that have understood this democratic maxim; for instance, the free trade debate between the Conservatives and the Liberals in this country. It's a great example of this political maxim. The free trade debate between the Conservatives and the Liberals was actually a debate for the hearts and minds of the Canadian people. During that federal election Canadians had the opportunity to listen to the arguments, to contrast those arguments, and to compare the visions of the two parties on this crucial issue. In the process of casting their vote, the Canadian people were providing legitimacy for that government to

act on their vision and on their policies. They were providing the Conservative government led by Brian Mulroney with the legitimacy that was needed to enter into negotiations with the United States and to eventually pass the free trade act between our two great nations.

I believe that we need to start this debate by clearly stating that while this government has the power to bring forth this piece of legislation, I believe that it lacks the legitimacy to do so. Albertans understand this. We are a politically astute people. We are politically astute enough to know when to punish a government that is misusing its power and abusing that fine line of legitimacy and when it is not. When governments cross that line, as, ironically, the Mulroney government did later when it passed the GST, then the people respond with their votes. It's then that the people, when they speak, have a habit of letting governments understand that they've gone too far, and those governments have a habit of losing power in the next general election.

So I place before this government that you are walking a very fine line on Bill 20 and that it may turn out that Bill 20 is another example of a government that engages in the practice of campaigning on one set of policies and then passing legislation that does not have the support of the people, and therefore the bill lacks legitimacy. Regardless of the fact that the representatives in the government may have a majority and may be able to pass this bill, it will lack legitimacy because you did not campaign on this major piece of legislation.

Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, is actually, as the minister said, two acts. Okay; three, but two major ones. The first, the Climate Leadership Act, gives the government the authority to enact a carbon tax on Albertans and then to decide that some Albertans will be more equal than others and to decide who will receive consumer rebates on some of the various carbon taxes that will be placed upon the people of Alberta.

The second act is the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act. It establishes an agency to oversee the implementation of some of the various carbon programs and taxes that will make every Albertan in this province poor. Specifically, the legislation is called upon to raise awareness regarding energy use and the associated economic and environmental consequences. It's called upon to promote, design, and deliver programs related to energy efficiency, conservation and the development of microgeneration and small-scale energy use, and to promote an energy efficiency services industry.

I would place before this House and before the minister that not all of those things are bad, that the adoption of some of these things may even make our province a better province, but this agency, which is to administer somewhere around \$170 million annually in loans and grants to support the purposes as already stated . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Cyr: I would like to ask my fellow member – I don't know if we've heard it, but I don't believe the NDP campaigned on the carbon tax. Now, had they campaigned on the carbon tax, do you think that Albertans would have been okay with the Alberta government taking money away from school systems? As the shadow Education minister, do you think that if they had platformed on taking funds away from students, that would have gone very far with Albertans, and would they be in government today?

Mr. Smith: Thank you to the member for the question. You know, I think that when we look at the whole issue of legitimacy, a democracy is built on transparency and on the people understanding

the platforms of the political parties and the views of each of the individuals and having an opportunity to choose between those political parties and the visions that they represent. I believe that with a piece of legislation that is as significant as this piece of legislation and that will literally have life-changing consequences for the people of Alberta, to have campaigned on it would have been within the expectations of a democratic population and a democratic system of government. A government is always better having campaigned and having placed the vision that they have before the people when it wants to then go before the Legislature, go before the people's representatives, and pass legislation.

5:50

We would not be able to bring, perhaps, some of our concerns about this legislation with as much vigour and with as much justification before this Assembly if you had campaigned on this in the general election. You would have been able to come back and clearly say to us: "We campaigned on this. The people of Alberta heard about this. They knew that we would be raising the taxes on your gas by 4.5 cents," come this January, I believe, "and they understood that we would be phasing out coal early, that we would be starting to increase the costs of transporting every good that comes by rail."

You see, when the people are given the opportunity to understand what the platform is and then to make clear choices and decisions about those platforms, then the people have given their consent to that vision. The people of Alberta expect a democratic form of government to function in such a way that it respects the will of the people. It doesn't really matter whether you have a majority government or not. It doesn't really matter that the election is three years down the road. Just because we have a seat in this House doesn't mean that we have the right to ignore the wishes of the people.

That's one of the reasons why, as we go through this debate, I would hope that the members of this Legislature are actually listening to what the people are saying and what their constituents are telling them. I know that it is easy to be political. It's not always easy to be democratic. There's a difference. Each of us in this House needs to understand that difference, and when we forget what that difference is, then we end up like some other political parties, out of office. So let us all . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Speaking on the bill, I'll recognize the hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Is it under 29(2)(a)?

The Deputy Speaker: No. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is done.

Ms Phillips: Sorry. I thought I was under 29(2)(a).

The Deputy Speaker: Oh. You can't speak on the bill. That's right. You have spoken. My apologies.

Go ahead, hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The NDP is introducing another bill that appears to be purely ideological. The fact is that this is not the first time we've seen this. This is actually the second time that we've seen something that wasn't on their platform being moved forward by this government, with a massive lack of consultation. Now, if we hadn't already been through this with Bill 6, I could see that we probably would have a good reason to be going down this road again with this new government, but we're seeing the same mistakes made over and over again. The fact is that

we saw massive outrage, and we're still seeing that outrage coming from our farmers and ranchers, our rural, our urban. Everybody was very unhappy with the lack of consultation done by this government, and we're seeing it now with this carbon tax.

The fact is that when we look at where the carbon tax is going, something that is so important, we put the carbon tax bill – we rushed this bill through. The fact is that this is something that needed some more time to be reviewed and debated, but we're not going to see that because we are putting up this bill right at the end of session. Now, we're looking at a bill that was in first reading yesterday, second reading today, 95 pages, going through something that we actually need to put some real thought into to make sure that our most vulnerable aren't impacted negatively.

Now, saying, "Let's just give them 500 bucks, and it's going to solve all our problems" – suddenly what we're looking at is a systemic problem of a government that isn't listening. The fact is that with Bill 6 we saw Facebook pages of 50,000 people putting their names forward to say: you didn't listen. We want to actually contribute to this law, but we can't do that because – guess what? – you're pushing through legislation too fast again. Why? Why does it have to be this fast? Why can't we at least look at bringing something like this, that is so important, obviously, to this government, to a standing committee? This is something that needs to be moved forward so that we can discuss it more thoroughly. Bring it to stakeholders. But you know what? We didn't do that with the farming bill. We're not going to do that with this bill because in the end – and again this goes back to my original point – ideology is what runs this government.

I do believe that there are good intentions with these bills. I don't believe that you're out to harm Alberta, but I do believe that the lack of consultation has effects that are very, very, very unintentional, yet we see that people are being affected by it. The fact is that through the carbon tax this will be levying, or taxing, depending on the point of view, more costs on families, charities, schools, hospitals. This is actually being levied on Albertans right now.

Now, we've heard already that this is only going to cost around \$500. Now we're hearing: "Well, jeez, you know what? It's going to be an extra hundred dollars because of indirect costs." We've asked repeatedly, "Show us how you came up with the numbers," and all we get is nothing. There are no answers because you have no answers. How can you not see the fact that in the end we are going down a path where we don't know how it's going to affect our most vulnerable? Are we going to see seniors on the streets? Are we going to see children and single mothers put on the streets because of the fact that the unintended consequences of this carbon tax could really impede Albertans' way of life?

Again, when we look at ideology, this is not a good road for Alberta to go down. This is not what Albertans voted for. We have seen repeatedly the fact that when we put legislation through too fast, governments will eventually answer for it. The question is: are we going to end up with massive groups of people on our front doorstep again saying that we're going in the wrong direction? Again, sneaking in through the side door so you don't have to deal with them is not the answer. Not answering your phones at your constituency offices: not the answer. Getting rid of your e-mail: not the answer. That is a problem.

Now, let's look at the stakeholders here. If you had gone out to the stakeholders and said, "What do you think about this," they would have come back and said, "Could you bring us at least a framework of what you're looking to do?"

In the end what we are looking at is a bill that I believe was done on Friday of last week, introduced to us this week, yesterday, and

today we're actually debating the second reading. This is ludicrous. Now, had they actually consulted, they'd have been aware that their ill-advised carbon levy or tax, whatever it is that we want to look at going towards . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but the Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875