



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 30, 2016

Day 55

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W), Leader of the Official Opposition	Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 55 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 8 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

I must share that as I walked down the hall, I was advised by the Sergeant-at-Arms that today is St. Andrew's Day.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: School groups. The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of extremely bright young people from the incredible constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. These 22 students are from Beacon Heights school, and I must say that every October I look forward to visiting them during Read In Week. They ask some of the most intelligent, thoughtful questions out of all the schools that I visit, and I'm thrilled that they can join us again in the Assembly. They're here with their teacher, Ms Meryl Roberts, and volunteer Vicki Herron. They're also accompanied by Keria Omer Abdu and Scott Gudbranson. I'd ask all the students and their teachers and volunteers to rise and enjoy the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you Miss Megan Perram. She's a constituent of Edmonton-Centre, a graduate studies student in the newly formed gender and social justice department at the University of Alberta. I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly this year's inductees into Alberta's 4-H Hall of Fame. It is fitting that they are here today on the last day of National 4-H Month. Helen Andrews has been a 4-H leader and volunteer for 40 years in many roles, including district treasurer and secretary, regional secretary, and was a founding member of Focus on 4-H. Mrs. Andrews is also involved in numerous community organizations, including the Round Hill agriculture society, and was a pride of Strathcona award recipient.

Corine Verbeek has been a 4-H leader and volunteer for more than 30 years, including roles as district key leader and president, northwest regional president, and provincial equine leaders forum committee member. Mrs. Verbeek is described as someone with extreme passion and enthusiasm who's always willing to do whatever is needed to make a 4-H event successful or help 4-H members learn.

Well, I'd like to personally thank both Helen and Corine for their outstanding service to their communities. They're here today with family and friends as well as Alesha Hill, 4-H volunteer development specialist with Agriculture and Forestry. Mr. Speaker, I'd like

them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mrs. Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all my fellow members in the House my special guests, who contribute to the success of the micro-society in Red Deer-North: Stu Henry, superintendent of the Red Deer public school district; Cathy Peacocke, Red Deer public school vice-chair; Braden Kilpatrick, principal of Aspen Heights; Allan Baile, Aspen Heights teacher; Trent Hagerman, Aspen Heights student and micro-society owner of worm wranglers and the bottle depot, a fully licensed bottle depot; Delila Osmanovic, Aspen Heights student and micro-society member of parliament and minister of small business; Mackenzie Brown, Aspen Heights student and micro-society prime minister. I ask that my guests stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Pasquale Russo and Randeem Burr. They are here today representing Vista Housing for Seniors, a significant provider of quality affordable apartment options for seniors who live in the Edmonton region. Randeem is their chief administrative officer, and Pasquale is a facility manager. I would ask that they now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce a constituent of mine, Mr. Steve Grover. I met him at an event at the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured, where he shared his passion with me for motorcycles, ATVs, and road safety. As a veteran personal injury lawyer with a practice in Calgary Mr. Grover looks forward to observing the debate on Bill 36 and seeing his MLA in action. I would ask him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Woollard: Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to stand today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Leslie Sax. Leslie is a fellow supporter of the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta, which, most people know, provides housing for people living with schizophrenia and increases awareness of schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders. We met at an event in which there were family members of people living with schizophrenia who had written and were performing a production, a play called *Starry Starry Night*. The play illustrates how people living with schizophrenia deal with their illness in a very realistic and moving way. Leslie, if you could please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the board of directors of the Chinese Benevolent Association of Edmonton. The Chinese Benevolent Association has been helping members of our Chinese community

since 1929. Their legacy includes Edmonton's Chinatown Gate, the Chinese Elders' Mansion and seniors' lodge, the Chinatown Care Centre, the Chinatown Multicultural Centre, pagodas in Beechmount and Northern Lights cemeteries, and more. They also organize major events such as the Lunar New Year Celebration, the Chinatown Conference, the Mid-autumn Festival, to name just a few. They are strong advocates and excellent representatives of Edmonton's dynamic Chinese community. Joining us today are Mei Hung, Lap Cheung Kwong, Allan Kwan, Henry Fung, and Raymond Ng. I would ask that they please rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of this House Bonnie Lopushinsky and Tony Bagga from the Heart Lake First Nation, just north of Lac La Biche. Bonnie is the communication co-ordinator for the First Nation. In this role she's responsible for communications between chief and council and other levels of government, specifically in the areas of investment and business, justice, social programs, and health. Tony is the consultation director and provides liaison between business and the Nation, focusing on economic development and investments, with a focus on the environment. May I please ask Bonnie and Tony to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

1:40

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly someone who has been on this journey through public service with me from the very beginning, my constituency assistant Kathryn Casement. Kathryn works incredibly hard in our constituency office every day to bring services and to help all of our constituents in Calgary-East. They're incredibly lucky to have her, as am I, so if she could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, I apologize in advance. I'll go fast because I have quite a few introductions. One of the largest privileges of being in this position is meeting some incredible people. The individuals who are here are here from AARC, the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre. They're advocating for their treatment program, which is specially designed for adolescents 12 to 21 years of age who are diagnosed with substance use disorder. As I say your names, if you wouldn't mind please rising: Byron, Tammy, Dona, Deb, Robyn, Maureen, Joan, Dennis, another Joan, Pamela, Darryl, Elizabeth, Wendy, Lexi, Linda, Michel, Melissa, Keegan, and Rudi. I hope that I haven't forgotten anybody else. If I have forgotten, please stand with the group. I thank you so much for your service to youth. Members, please join me in extending our traditional welcome to the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an Albertan leader who is taking on the fight against adolescent addiction. Dr. Jackie Smith is currently the director of community education and research at the Alberta Adolescent

Recovery Centre. Dr. Smith has been employed with AARC for the past eight years. She completed her PhD in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary, where she explored the impact of addiction on the family through the lens of a mother. Thank you to all the advocates here today from AARC. Jackie, I ask that you please enjoy the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some guests from the most conservative constituency in the world: Strathmore-Brooks. I'd like to introduce some people who do very great work for Alberta and my constituents. Heather Pigott is my senior constituency assistant from Brooks. She has worked for me since the 2015 election. She is here with her husband, Jo, and Doug Fenton. She is an absolute pillar of strength for the work that I do in Strathmore-Brooks. She is really the only reason anyone likes me there.

Her husband, Jo Pigott, is here. He has worked in oil and gas since 1995. He is a part owner of a small drilling company in Brooks and has been deeply affected by low oil prices. I'll not mention anything else that's hurt his business. Jo has been involved as a Wildrose volunteer and is a huge part of our constituency association.

Doug Fenton is Heather's father. He's from Edmonton. He is a retired upstream oil and gas worker of over 40 years.

Liz McConnell is here. She is my constituency assistant from Strathmore, who also does amazing work, particularly on casework like AISH and workers' compensation. She is an asset to my team.

Mr. Speaker, these people make me look good, at least as far as that's possible. I ask that they please stand and receive the greeting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Andrew Jones. Andrew is here in Edmonton meeting – advocating for an end to homelessness. He's also famous for being the Alberta Party's Calgary-Varsity constituency association president. I'll have Andrew please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other guests?

Members' Statements

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

Pipeline Construction

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with most Albertans I welcomed the good news of two new pipeline approvals yesterday. [some applause] I hope I get extra seconds. Line 3 on the Trans Mountain expansion will create thousands of jobs and billions in economic activity. Getting these pipelines will be a long-deserved victory for Alberta.

But as a former pipeline projects engineer I know that many challenges lie ahead. There will be fierce opposition to Kinder Morgan, specifically by those who would deny the science and engineering of pipelines. This ideological opposition will play out in the streets and in the courts.

We will need to come together as a Legislature and as a province to ensure we get shovels in the ground ASAP. As a former energy

worker and as a member of the opposition I want to do my part to make sure this happens. There will need to be firm timelines so these projects don't fall victim to schedule and cost overruns. Any delays could cause us to lose access to new markets, billions of dollars, and jobs. This is something that cannot be allowed to happen, and I'm sure we can all agree. We are here to serve the people before the party, and the pipelines serve in the interests of the people of Alberta and Canada.

Unfortunately, we are already starting to hear opposition to the pipelines from inside this government. Members of the Premier's oil sands advisory group have worked to block the Trans Mountain expansion. Elizabeth May said that she would go to jail before she would let this project happen. Let's come together and call these voices what they are: extreme and unhelpful. Let's keep fighting for the new pipelines to tidewater, like Energy East and Keystone XL. Let's demand fair value for our ethical oil. Let's write our own future today and always.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I want to remind all members of the practice we have in this House. When members' statements are made, there are no comments made from any side of the House.

Microsociety School Program in Red Deer

Mrs. Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, I am proud that my statements reflect my sincere fondness for Red Deer-North. Today I bring the unique microsociety within Aspen Heights school to the attention of the House.

Microsociety integrates our educational curriculum with a mini marketplace. The students and staff of Aspen Heights participate in the supply and demand aspects aligned with our present socioeconomic model. Students learn and experience the true essence of government and democratic process. Each student from kindergarten to grade 5 contributes their knowledge, skills, and abilities to the success of their microsociety. With a strong connection between curriculum and market activity, the fundamentals of knowledge achievement is engaged through hands-on participation. Within this unique society is a fully licensed bottle depot, where numeracy, literacy, efficacy, and inclusion are elements of the real world that are engaged.

What is truly exclusive within this microsociety is the strong support of inclusion, parity, and the simple notion that our children can dream big. There are no preconceived societal limitations that prejudice their place within their society. Their active labour market policies support that everyone's contributions are integral and vital to the success of their community.

Mr. Speaker and fellow members, within the heart of Red Deer-North is a place without bias, where our children are learning the true essence of community, which is the fabric of our great province. As their minds are fashioned to learn, they are experiencing a society that is void of division. They are introduced to the concepts of a minimum wage and health and safety at the onset and will carry these values throughout their lives. These are strong sandbox morals and lessons. They reflect socioeconomic ideologies that contribute to an economy where strong social conscience is universal.

I am proud that microsociety exists within my constituency of Red Deer-North. Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Pipeline Construction

Mr. Jean: Given the independent evidence-based approval by the National Energy Board for new pipeline projects, yesterday's announcements were long overdue. While the rejection of the approved Northern Gateway pipeline is a terrible politicized decision, we welcome the approval of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain and Enbridge's line 3 pipeline expansion. This decision is good for Alberta if these pipelines actually get built. We've seen pipelines approved in the past, only to be tied up in legal battles by special-interest groups. Is the NDP committed to denouncing those willing to do anything to stop Alberta's pipelines? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I don't think I've ever been more excited for question period than I am for the one today. Today is a good day for Alberta, and it's a good day for Albertans. Because of the leadership of this government, Alberta did see two new pipeline approvals yesterday. We saw what happened with Conservative governments in the past, who move forward on a do-nothing approach. Instead, we did something, and we saw yesterday that we're getting real results.

Mr. Jean: Of course, we also had yesterday several key NDP advisers declaring a battle against Alberta's pipelines. NDP oil sands adviser Karen Mahon is rallying opposition to Kinder Morgan, quote, in the streets, in the courts, and at the ballot box. End quote. Another member, Tim Gray, has his organization promising to, quote, dig in to stop the Energy East pipeline. Oil sands adviser co-chair Tzeporah Berman denounced new pipelines entirely. Sounds like none of them care much about a carbon tax and what that gives us. We can't have people working for Alberta and Albertans who want to destroy our energy sector. It's ridiculous. When will the Premier fire . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Just to recap what somebody else said yesterday, the Prime Minister said that we could not have approved this project without the leadership of our Premier and Alberta's climate leadership plan, Mr. Speaker.

The mandate of the group that's being referred to is to look at ways we can achieve the hundred megatonne cap on emissions while respecting the work that we need to do with energy companies, environmental leaders, and those who represent workers, Mr. Speaker. We saw what happened when the member opposite was in Ottawa and we had a Conservative government in Alberta here: nothing. I see the score. It's two to nothing.

Mr. Jean: While the Premier claims her oil sands advisers don't approve pipelines, they declared openly that new development will actually exceed the legislated emissions cap, meaning no new oil sands development is even possible. That sends a very dangerous signal to investors and to future pipeline prospects. If president-elect Donald Trump immediately approves Keystone in January, this cap will begin constricting activity in the oil sands for the long term. It'll constrict it. Leave no question about it. This cap puts growth in our oil sands at risk. Why, then, is the NDP doubling down on this decision?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we saw what happened when the Official Opposition spoke into an echo chamber. We got nothing

accomplished. Instead, we've brought people together who represent environmental organizations, First Nations, oil and gas. We brought them together one year ago. We all stood on stage, and we moved forward with a very thoughtful climate leadership plan, and it is seeing real results. The proof is in the pipelines.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Jean: Proof isn't action, Mr. Speaker. We've seen very little action actually happen with this government.

Oil and Gas Transportation to the West Coast

Mr. Jean: Wildrose was proud last spring when all parties in this House supported a motion for the government to lobby against a tanker ban and in support of the Northern Gateway pipeline. But yesterday Ottawa ignored approval from the National Energy Board. They politicized the decision-making on pipelines by saying no. They made it worse by implementing a tanker ban that will choke out any new pipeline proposals through northern B.C. Why hasn't the NDP pushed back against a decision that is blocking \$300 billion in economic growth in Canada?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. If you spend time in Vancouver, where we're going to see this pipeline expansion go to, you'll see that there are tankers there today. They're exporting Alberta honey, Alberta beef to Asian markets, and we are so proud of that. And because of the good results of this government and action on a pipeline, we're going to be able to add our oil and gas products to the Asia Pacific market, and I couldn't be prouder. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. government members, tone it down. Tone it down.

Mr. Jean: Policy that blocks Canadian oil from moving to the west coast but allows dictator oil to be imported on the east coast is simply ridiculous. It's disappointing the NDP hasn't lifted a finger to oppose it at all. Alberta doesn't need just one pipeline; we need several. A project like Gateway would have meant – listen to this – \$98 billion in tax revenues over 30 years. Blocking crude oil tanker traffic on the northern B.C. coast blocks a sensible route for any new pipeline projects and the jobs that will come with them for Albertans and all Canadians. Will the NDP lobby against this tanker ban? Yes or no?

Ms Hoffman: I said it in the first question, Mr. Speaker. I'll say it to everyone. There are tankers on the coast right now bringing our products overseas, and because of the work of this government, because of the successful work in getting two pipelines approved, we will have the ability to sell our product to the Asia Pacific markets, and the only ones talking down Alberta's economy and our great success are the Official Opposition. I wish you'd stop talking down our pipelines. [interjections]

The Speaker: Stop the clock, please.

I can feel the emotion in the room today. There is a very buoyant feeling to the room but also a very noisy one.

Please start the clock.

Mr. Jean: The decision to reject Northern Gateway sets a very dangerous precedent. It shows that Ottawa is more interested in playing politics with pipeline approvals than respecting the

evidence-based work done by the National Energy Board. The result today is \$300 billion in potential economic growth that has vanished, simply vanished. It leaves all future pipeline approvals up to political calculation instead of science and what's good for the economy and all Canadians. Will the Premier denounce Ottawa's decision to reverse the approval done by the NEB, and if not, why not?

Ms Hoffman: Don Braid this morning in the *Calgary Herald* said, "The federal approval is a sign of hope just as the economy might be ready to rise again. Politicians who carp at such a moment start to look as intransigent as the hardline oilsands opponents. Nothing will please them." Mr. Speaker, I have to say once again that we are proud to take leadership on the international stage economically, environmentally, and Albertans sure have done a good job in sending us to Ottawa because we're getting results. [interjections]

The Speaker: We warn you again, hon. members: the volume. I've asked that we stop the clock again, folks. Please tone it down.

Third main question. Start the clock.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate that.

Let me be clear. New pipelines are good for Alberta and Albertans, but I don't think Albertans need to be forced to pay for a punishing new carbon tax. It's a carbon tax that isn't stopping any legal battles, any protests, or even convincing NDP appointees that Alberta has the social licence for new pipelines. The fact is that in just 32 days the NDP's carbon tax is going to come into place before any shovels are even in the ground. This tax is bad news for Alberta families and businesses right across the province. Premier, why won't you just simply cancel the carbon tax?

Ms Hoffman: Well, if he won't listen to the Prime Minister and he won't listen to the *Calgary Herald*, maybe he'll listen to a CEO, a CEO for Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, Chris Bloomer, who said: this process would not have come to the outcome it has without Alberta's climate leadership plan. He also went on to say: so clearly it fits with the climate policy and the agenda of the government. Guess what? Our agenda is working. Protect the environment. Protect jobs. Grow the economy. I wish you'd stop being so barrel-half-empty and think about the two-thirds barrel we just got yesterday, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, do you want me to stop the clock again? Tone it down.

Mr. Jean: It was bad enough when the NDP imposed a \$30 per tonne carbon tax, but slipped into yesterday's pipeline announcement by the Prime Minister was a big thumbs up from Alberta for an alarming \$50 per tonne carbon tax. That's a startling amount of money that will come from charities, from businesses, and families' pocketbooks to pay for this Premier's green slush funds. The Premier has given her blessing for an even more expensive carbon tax. Will the Premier release the numbers on the full cost of this carbon tax? Yes or no?

2:00

Ms Hoffman: We know the price of doing nothing. We saw the Leader of the Official Opposition do that for 10 years in Ottawa, and the result was nothing. Instead, we've taken a thoughtful motion on moving forward and increasing our market access. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? Here's the result: two pipelines. We're working. It's being successful. I'm sorry. You won't wipe the smile off my face. Today is a good day for Albertans.

Mr. Jean: It seems, Mr. Speaker, that whenever Ottawa says, “Jump,” the NDP asks, “How high?” on the way up.

On coal they’re wasting billions of dollars to shut off plants. Now a carbon tax that the vast majority of Albertans don’t want: the Premier has given her blessings to this, and it’s wrong. Energy infrastructure should not be tied to how much we tax people. Every time Alberta asks for a new pipeline, you shouldn’t come up with a new way to tax Albertans. Why, then, did the Premier go all in on yesterday’s announcement while signing off on a plan that will simply hammer taxpayers at home and hurt Albertans every place across this province?

Ms Hoffman: Well, here’s another quote, Mr. Speaker, from Carolyn Dunn from the CBC: the skyscrapers in Calgary seem just a little bit taller today as Alberta’s oil industry, a major driver in the Canadian economy, celebrates what it calls a new opportunity to compete globally. We’re smiling. The skyscrapers in Calgary are smiling. Albertans are smiling. We’re getting real results. I wish you’d just stop and smile and be grateful for the fact that we’re actually getting results for Albertans instead of just trying to beat everybody up every day.

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

Provincial Debt Repayment

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister complains that the price of oil has left a big hole in Alberta’s finances. Nobody blames the government for the price of oil. We do blame them for their response. The NDP has promised to run the provincial debt up to \$60 billion, with no plan to pay even one dollar of it back. To the Finance minister. You’ve made it clear that your plan for getting through the recession is to borrow like there’s no tomorrow. Will you now tell Albertans how they’ll clean up your mess by paying it back when tomorrow does come?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the question from the third-party leader. You know, our plan is showing results. Q2 was released on Monday, and that plan talked about 2017 being a more positive experience and environment in terms of growth, GDP than this year. If we’re seeing that happen and we’re seeing two pipelines approved, we’re going to see even more investment come back to this province. When we see more investment, we’ll see a smaller deficit, and we’ll get back to the plan of balancing.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Since Northern Gateway, approved when we were in government, was cancelled, you’re minus one there.

Mr. Speaker, I’m sure the government is banking on revenue from the newly approved Kinder Morgan pipeline to bail them out of their leaky fiscal boat, so let’s talk a bit more. Trans Mountain is estimated to generate \$1.3 billion in royalties a year. The problem is that by 2019 the interest payments on the accumulated debt from this government will be \$3 billion a year. To the Energy minister: since the Finance minister has borrowed so much that the pipelines approved won’t even cover the interest on the borrowing, do you have a couple more pipelines to support your Finance minister’s big-spending ways?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. You know, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is that we’re keeping the spending tap down. That side

over there: what they did was that they had their operational spending glued to the price of oil, so it went up and it went down. That hurt Albertans. That hurt investment. That left us in a recessionary hole. We’re fixing that. You broke it.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, no Albertan believes this Finance minister is controlling spending, but he does brag that Alberta has the lowest GDP of any province in Canada. You’re welcome, Minister. It currently sits at 9.7 per cent, and the government plans to grow it to 15.5 per cent by 2019. The fact is that Alberta’s ratio was at 3.4 when the NDP took office. To put that in perspective, this government is going to triple the debt-to-equity ratio in one term of office. To the Finance minister. Albertans deserve to know if your department is even working on a debt repayment plan. Are you simply planning on defaulting on the mortgage?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. I think I’ve said this many times over. You know, our plan is to make sure that spending stays under control, not like the previous government, where spending sometimes went up 10 per cent, went up 8 per cent, went up 6 per cent. We’re far under that in terms of growth plus CPI. I will tell you that if they had put more money away in the good years, we would have a lot more today. They spent it like drunken sailors. Now we’re having to deal with it.

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

Pipeline Construction (continued)

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Breaking Alberta’s land-lock and accessing new markets is a significant step towards a stronger economic future for Alberta. Given the economic impact an additional 1 million barrels of oil sold per day will have on our province, to the Minister of Energy: how will the government engage with the federal government and ensure the Trans Mountain and line 3 pipeline projects are built?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we’re going to keep working. We haven’t been the cheerleaders on the sideline hoping pipelines would get built. We have rolled our sleeves up. We’re going to continue to roll up our sleeves and do the work that it takes to support the companies who are trying to build these pipelines. We’re going to keep on talking about our climate leadership plan, we’re going to keep on working with our First Nations and communities, and we’re going to keep talking about how to get pipelines built.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Prime Minister singled out the Premier’s leadership and our government’s climate leadership plan as the reason why pipelines were approved, to the Minister of Energy: what role did our climate leadership plan have in building a national consensus on these projects?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, within a week of us announcing the climate leadership plan, I started hearing from our stakeholders that the conversation was changing, and it has continued to change throughout the year. The

results of that climate leadership plan and talking about it were proven yesterday, when we got two pipelines approved.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the approval of these projects was premised on Alberta's strong environmental policy, to the Minister of Energy: how will these pipelines support the work of our climate leadership plan?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we've said all along that there isn't a disconnect between being environmentally responsible and extracting our resources. We're going to continue with that message. By getting pipelines to tide-water, we are going to have more money kept in Alberta. We don't have to be at the mercy of our one customer, who is now our competitor, down south. We can get better prices for our product, and that money in Alberta will help to work us towards a greener economy.

Government Spending

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, this week the second quarterly fiscal update was released, containing projections for a record deficit and a record \$14 billion of new debt this year alone. The only silver lining is a \$100 million rounding error from the last quarterly update, which the minister called a modest improvement. That's .007 per cent of the deficit. Modest indeed. At that rate it will take 35 years to balance the budget. Does the minister have a credible plan to balance the budget before his 95th birthday?

Mr. Ceci: I just wonder how he knows how old I am, Mr. Speaker.

I do have a plan. We do have a plan, of course. If he was reading the Q2 report, he also knows that next year there's going to be 2.3 per cent growth to our GDP in this province. Twenty-five thousand jobs over the last three months have been added, and the deficit is coming down. They would have thrown kids out to the street by not having them in schools. They would have closed hospitals. They would have made life less stable for Albertans.

2:10

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, we can go back to the comment you made at a later time in the agenda, but I must tell you that you looked much younger when you arrived here than you do today.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, it's going to be Albertans who throw them out on the street.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the government has already blown their budget for this year, overspending by \$600 million – in addition, the government has already dropped its commitment to find \$250 million of in-year savings just halfway through the year. Is the minister so unconcerned with the out-of-control spending and deficit of this government that he couldn't keep his commitment to find .004 per cent of the budget in in-year savings?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, we take our promises in terms of the budget very seriously. We have found those in-year savings and more, so that's a really good thing. You know, we are working, of course, to bend the curve on spending. That is happening as well.

You know, the other side is: spend some weeks, cut other weeks. We're focused on one thing. Delivering good programs and services, diversifying the economy, getting Albertans back to work: those are the things that are needed now as our economy is starting to come up again.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, every week is a spending week for the NDP.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that on Monday the minister was asked if 2024 was still their rough, shot-in-the-dark target for a balanced budget, despite there being no plan whatsoever to get there, and the minister confirmed that this was still their rough target with an unenthusiastic verbal shoulder shrug – based on the current projections, a child born this coming March would owe \$22,500 of provincial government debt by the time the NDP actually balances the budget, when that child turns seven years old. Does the minister believe that it is moral to saddle young Albertans with the reckless borrowed money of today?

Mr. Ceci: You know, what Albertans were unenthusiastic about was the platform of that party in the last election. What we're doing with regard to children is that we're making sure there are schools so that they can get an education. We're making sure there are hospitals so that when they go to the doctor, there's somebody to see them. I welcome the time when there'll be those children on this side of the House, pointing back to you and saying: you would have broken it for us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Pipeline Construction

(continued)

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Credit where credit is due. Trudeau Liberals bless Kinder Morgan seven months after NEB approval. Flash back to Northern Gateway, approved over two years ago. But not everyone is celebrating. Vancouver's Gregor Robertson called it a huge step backward for the economy, environment, and for climate change while he used the terms "fraudulent," "ugly," and "insurrection" in reference to his position that pipelines should never get built. To the Minister of Energy: to the rhythm of NDP chest beating, will you commit to Albertans when we will see shovels in the ground?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. In past conversations with Ian Anderson of Kinder Morgan I understood that shovels will be in the ground within the year.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll hold the minister to that timeline.

Given Mayor Robertson's steadfast opposition, Elizabeth May's vow to risk jail, and trusted NDP advisers Berman and Mahon suggesting protests, lawsuits, and flaunting defiance of the rule of law, again to the minister: did you not promise to bring our opponents onboard with regard to market access through trade in the magical currency of social licence?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, some of our colleagues elsewhere: I respectfully disagree with some of their stances, but I totally support their right to do so. There is a great deal of people in the middle who love what we're doing and love that we got the pipeline. There will always be people on the extremes that do that, and if they wish to protest, I support their right to do that all the way to jail if that's what it takes.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always good to have the NDP world view.

Given this government's gloating over pipeline approval despite a lack of any reasonable expectation of timely construction due to opposition from their friends and given that Northern Gateway was approved in 2014, only to be killed yesterday by the PM, and given that the same foreign-funded groups who managed to block Northern Gateway will now shift protest to Trans Mountain, again to the minister: how long will this project sit in courts and the lawless court of public opinion before your government accepts that the groups opposing pipelines care not for social licence?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, there is a fundamental difference between the two pipelines. Enbridge did everything they were asked for Northern Gateway, but who failed that process was the Conservative governments, who did not do their due diligence. The process for Kinder Morgan is fairly solid. It may go to court, but if it does, I think there's been a solid consultation. They have done everything right, as has the government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Addiction Treatment Services for Adolescents

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Addiction is a disease where an individual seeks to escape through substance abuse and other behaviours. This disease affects the lives of everyone around these individuals, and it can happen to anyone, especially young adults, who face many forms of societal pressures. But there is hope, especially with excellent treatment programs which focus on the family unit as a whole. To the minister: what is your government doing to support adolescents and their families who are struggling with addictions?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Our hearts go out to anyone who has a family member dealing with the disease of addiction. We know that there are great struggles amongst families trying to find the right supports for their family members. We also know that when someone is ready for treatment, we need to do everything that we can to make sure that they can access that treatment as quickly as possible, which is why I'm really proud of the work our government has done around expanding access to children and young adults, especially in the Calgary area. We've seen wait times go down from two weeks to same day and next day.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre, or AARC, was formed in Calgary in 1990 as a not-for-profit Alberta company with the mission to provide semiresidential placement components which provide training and support to the entire family and given that today they have participated in nonpartisan discussions with all parties here and given that this is a cost-effective program requesting provincial government support to allow their life-saving work to continue, to the minister: will you consider this funding request, and when can this organization expect an answer?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We agree that working with family members to support loved ones with addictions is critically important as well as ensuring that those wraparound services are available for people who are moving through the treatment system. That is why our government

is proud to support work through Human Services and other services – mental health and the like – to ensure that those are available. I'm going to be meeting with representatives from the organization later this afternoon, and I look forward to the conversation with them.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the families, health professionals, and support staff at AARC understand that addiction is a chronic illness. Given that we all know that when we fail to treat chronic illness properly, we put strain on our acute systems, and given that failing to treat addictions properly at all stages of the process can result in merely going from crisis to crisis instead of encouraging health and well-being, does the minister agree that this program can form part of an overall approach to the treatment of chronic illness at the primary care level?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. One of the things that we heard loud and clear through the mental health review panel was the importance of implementing and embedding primary care networks as well as mental health supports and addiction supports. We've been working very closely with our partners in the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta as well as with the primary care network groups to see how we can expand access to those services as well as make sure that those referral networks are there, because so much of the good work done in our communities around mental health and addiction is done by groups operating in the community.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Pipeline Construction (continued)

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Announcing pipelines is one thing; building them is another. Anti-Alberta activists are already getting ready to battle against Kinder Morgan. What's worse, however, is that many of the naysayers are inside the NDP government. Karen Mahon, an adviser for the Premier, swore on Monday that Kinder Morgan will never happen and that this project will be stopped in the streets and in the courts. How can Albertans expect to see the project become a reality when this government is vowing to destroy it?

2:20

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really unfortunate the partisan games that the opposition is playing today. Almost a year ago the Leader of the Opposition asked: "Can the Premier give us one single example of a pipeline – any pipeline – that is closer to construction or approval as a result of her quiet diplomacy?" The answer is yes. We heard that yes yesterday.

Mr. Taylor: Given that Kinder Morgan is going to face loud opposition from ecoradicals like Mike Hudema, who himself penned the how-to guide on destroying pipelines along with the help of this environment minister, and given that Alberta needs pipelines going west, east, and south to tidewater, will this Premier also be supporting Energy East in order to ensure the pipeline's future isn't left in the hands of a few ecoradicals and the Leap Manifesto friends of this government?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Again, it's unfortunate that you're pitting politics against doing the right thing. In fact, their friends at the

conservative think tank prosperity fund called a pipeline approval a doomsday scenario for their own selfish political gains. Again, they're fearmongering today and trying to continue that. That progress is being made because of leadership that this government has shown. We've shown that we can create jobs, protect jobs, and take care of the environment at the same time.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, the Vancouver mayor has already promised to deliver protests like we've never seen. We need to keep working on accessing tidewater.

Given that the incoming U.S. administration has already pledged to support the Keystone XL pipeline, a project that would create thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity, and given that the common-sense project is already almost built, will the Premier reject the Leap Manifesto elements of this party and pledge her support here today for the Keystone XL pipeline?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. During the election the President-elect did say that he was looking to renegotiate that pipeline deal, so it's up to us to see what TransCanada feels about the pipeline. We will sit back and wait until those negotiations are done.

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

Government Advertising Expenses

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week the government declared that they were getting big money out of politics, so in the spirit of doing exactly that, can the minister responsible for democratic renewal provide all Albertans with the number of dollars spent on major advertising campaigns since the NDP took office and whether that figure falls within the proposed spending limit of \$2 million per party during an election?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are so proud that this government is getting big money out of politics. Our first act as government was to ban corporate and union donations, and I was very proud to introduce the Fair Elections Financing Act, which is going to continue that and make sure that we have a fair elections financing system. We've always said that government advertising should not be used to influence election campaigns, and currently government advertising during elections is banned by policy. Rules on government advertising are currently addressed in the Election Act, and we look forward to discussing them in the future when we revise the Election Act.

Mr. Rodney: Except the minister took it out of the bill.

Given that this government spent \$4.4 million on advertising the climate leadership plan, \$750,000 for Budget 2016, \$330,000 for a coal phase-out, \$210,000 for Bill 6, and a hundred thousand dollars for the PP lawsuit and given that these five campaigns alone cost \$6 million, which could have been spent around wellness campaigns, for example, again to this minister: if you are sincere in wanting big money out of politics, why does your government insist on spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money articulating the NDP world view on contentious issues?

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, Albertans have told us that they want big money out of politics. We are working to that effect. Albertans have not said that they want a government that never speaks to them and doesn't tell them what's

happening. It is our responsibility to communicate to Albertans the important leadership like the climate leadership plan so that they understand that when two pipelines are approved, it is because of this government.

Mr. Rodney: Given that we all agree that there is a need to communicate government policy to citizens and given that a number of aforementioned advertisements went far beyond communicating government policy and given that spending money on partisan advertising offers an enormous advantage going into an election, especially given the new spending limits, again to the minister: when will you introduce restrictions regarding what types of advertising the government can and cannot engage in preceding an election campaign? When will that happen?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Modernizing elections and elections financing should be a nonpartisan issue. Our government banned corporate and union donations, and we formed the Select Special Ethics And Accountability Committee. The opposition members took advantage of that committee to play partisan games rather than being able to discuss things like government advertising during an election. Instead, they filibustered, and they walked out. This government and I as the minister responsible will be reviewing the Election Act in due time. It's unfortunate that they could not work with the government on that committee.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Trade with Asia

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday it was announced that – wait for it – two new pipelines are going to take Alberta oil to new markets, including in Asia, thanks to the outstanding leadership of our Premier and this government. That means that finally our world-class energy producers will be able to sell at world-class prices. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what other types of trade are increasing with Asia?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Earlier this month I led Alberta's largest ever trade delegation to China and Japan. More than 80 Alberta businesses and economic development associations accompanied me on this mission. I can tell you that we were met by hundreds and hundreds of Chinese participants, businesses that are interested in partnering with Alberta businesses. They are interested in investing in our province. I can tell you that our trade with China increased by 16 per cent last year, and that is going to continue growing because of the efforts of our government.

Cortes-Vargas: Given that Statistics Canada recently reported that Alberta small businesses created more than 90 per cent of the 25,000 new jobs in Alberta over the last three months, to the same minister: how is this government supporting small businesses who are looking to start or increase trade in Asia?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our small businesses are leading the way in helping to build a stable, diversified economy for the future. Through our jobs plan we've increased supports for small businesses that are looking to or beginning to export and

looking to diversify into international markets. I can tell you that I'm very proud of our Alberta export expansion program, which provides support, both financially and also with mentorship, to help Alberta companies access international markets, which will open the doors to creating more jobs back here at home.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park is home to the Industrial Heartland and that businesses there are looking to expand trade opportunities, again to the same minister: how did the Chinese and Japanese companies respond to the recent trade mission, and what are participating local businesses and organizations saying?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that our businesses and Asian companies were thrilled that we led this delegation. Face-to-face, government-to-government interaction is absolutely critical for Asian markets. I can tell you that I'm proud that on our mission there were eight agreements signed between Alberta businesses and Chinese companies, with many more in the works. Let me tell you that one of the things that every single Chinese official asked me about was the status on pipelines and where it is. I can tell you that I was very proud and am proud today to stand here to say that we've got two new pipelines.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

2:30

Deaths of Children in Care

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Fifty-three: it's not a very large number until you consider that it's the number of cases of death and severe injury reported to the Alberta Child and Youth Advocate in 2015-16, with 22 deaths happening while children were receiving designated services and 29 deaths happening within two years of receiving intervention services. To the Premier. These crimes against our most vulnerable Albertans were all reported in the last year. When you consider that this includes three homicides, how many criminal charges have resulted from any of these reports?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, I wouldn't want to speak on investigations that are ongoing because it wouldn't be appropriate, but we can certainly look into closed investigations and charges that have been laid and get back to him with those numbers.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. Given that nine kilograms was all that four-year-old Serenity weighed when she was killed in 2014 and given that reports show this poor little girl stole food because she had been starved and given that the report detailed her having been beaten and raped before she eventually succumbed to her death from abuse and given that the death of Serenity is being investigated by the RCMP but people want answers, to the Minister of Justice: why has nobody been charged with the rape and murder of this child?

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Nothing could be more tragic than the

death of any child, particularly in circumstances such as these. That is why we thought it was so important to ensure that the RCMP were able to complete their investigation in the way that they saw fit and to protect the information in the report from the Chief Medical Examiner in order to ensure that they could complete that investigation. When they have completed that investigation, I'm sure that they will be happy to share that information.

Mr. Hanson: Given that 51 is the actual number of deaths of children and youth in care reported in 2015-16 and given that these are deplorable numbers that we should all be ashamed of and given that we have heard from the government that work is being done and that they have accepted the recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate and since we lack specific information, to the Minister of Human Services: have any of the people responsible for oversight on any of these cases been fired, suspended, or held accountable? Anybody?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. It's a deeply concerning issue, and I share in the devastation that members of this House and all Albertans are feeling. As the Minister of Justice indicated, it's an issue still under active investigation, so we will work with the RCMP and all involved to make sure that we get this right. At the same time, we are absolutely committed to making improvements to avoid similar incidents from happening in the future.

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

Job Creation

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I spoke to students in my constituency who are graduating. These students have put time and money into training for professional jobs, but despite this government's job-creation plan, which promised thousands of jobs, they have been unable to find jobs that would provide a solid base for their future. They have been having to make do with minimum wage, part-time, unstable jobs instead of participating in this wonderful vision put forward by this government. To the minister of economic development: when can tens of thousands of students graduating in Alberta each year expect to find rewarding and fulfilling and sustainable jobs that add to the economic diversity of Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I will direct the member to look at our Alberta jobs plan and the fact that through our new infrastructure projects, through the capital plan it's estimated that it will sustain or create 10,000 jobs for the next three years. I can tell the member that between March '15 and '16 through the Alberta Enterprise Corporation there were over 800 jobs created. Because our government restored the STEP program, 2,700 students had jobs this summer whereas the previous government had decided to cut that program.

Mr. Gill: Given that there has been a net loss of 5,000 jobs since last October, which was when the government announced their first jobs plan, which has since been cancelled, and given that the Q2 update from earlier this week shows that revenues from income taxes have declined, that indicates that these jobs pay less, that Albertans are being employed in marginal and part-time positions.

This job-creation plan promised to create 25,000 jobs. Even if it's working, it's not building the right bright future for Albertans. To the same minister: how do you actually plan to get the other 75,000 unemployed Albertans back to work?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to let the hon. member in on a little secret. The price of oil hit an all-time low and stayed there for a very long, long duration, which is having a significant impact on Alberta jobs and businesses. What I can tell you is that our government is taking action. There are a number of initiatives: increasing access to capital, supports for start-up companies. We've also as of January 1 reduced the small-business tax rate by one-third. We are the second-lowest jurisdiction in Canada. I can tell you as well that through a number of initiatives, from our export expansion program to the petrochemical diversification program . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gill: Given that these kinds of jobs that have been created are in entry level fields, are not mortgage-paying jobs, don't add to the diversity of our economy, and will not help Albertans support their families and given that the wages alone for 25,000 Albertans at the average wage of \$50,000 per year would cost \$1.25 billion, none of your unco-ordinated job plans come close to the growing economy by that much. While this government would love to talk about the unbuild pipeline, what is it doing to restore the Alberta advantage now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I will point the member to our Alberta jobs plan.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Energy. With her new, modernized royalty framework there are over 200 wells that are now being drilled because of our early adoption. Those 200-plus wells create 135 direct and indirect jobs. The two tax credits being debated in this House are forecast to create thousands of jobs and ensure that Albertans invest in Alberta businesses to help them grow. These are our job creators. As well as leading trade missions, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and I . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Election Financing Legislation

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's actually try talking about elections financing. On Monday the minister responsible for democratic renewal introduced Bill 35. Like Bill 1, that banned corporate and union donations to political parties, this bill also proposes to get big money out of politics by capping individual donations at \$4,000. To the Minister of Labour: why is this government moving forward with a \$4,000 single aggregate limit?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The one aggregate contribution limit will apply to all political entities, candidates, and constituencies receiving contributions. This means that in a calendar year an individual Albertan can choose to contribute a maximum of \$4,000 in any combination. It also means that the one aggregate

limit will apply to elections, by-elections, nomination contestants, and leadership contests.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the bill also limits what we can spend on an election campaign to \$50,000 per constituency . . .

Mr. Rodney: Point of order.

The Speaker: A second point of order.

Mr. Nielsen: . . . and \$2 million per party, can the minister explain what expenses are not counted toward this limit, and why not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question as the bill is not up for debate today, so the opportunity to speak to it is appreciated. We recognize that not all candidates and constituencies are the same. As such, the spending limit would not apply to a candidate's or contestant's reasonable travel costs, child care, or expenses related to a disability. These exceptions from the spending limit will help level the playing field for candidates with larger ridings and will help remove barriers for those with children or disabilities.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's not only political parties who spend money on campaigns for elections, can the minister explain how this will apply to groups other than political parties?

Mr. Rodney: Point of order.

The Speaker: I've noted your points of order, sir.

Mr. Rodney: Three of them.

The Speaker: I've got all three, sir.

2:40

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During an election third-party advertisers, if this bill is passed, would be subject to a spending limit of \$150,000 overall, with no more than \$3,000 being spent in relation to any one particular riding. This is similar in other jurisdictions. Between elections third parties would have to register with Elections Alberta and disclose contributions on a sunshine list. As well, they will be required to disclose contributions over \$250 weekly during an election. Disclosure of those contributions would in turn be published by Elections Alberta. Albertans would then know who was paying to influence their opinions.

The Speaker: You have 20 seconds if any members would like to leave the House.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Pipeline Construction

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me offer congratulations to the Premier for yesterday's pipeline approvals because, in truth, if we were in government, we would be happy,

too. But, Premier, I caution you against cracking the champagne just yet. Approval is a good first step, but it's only one step of many, something our former PC government was well aware of because we were pleased when the Northern Gateway got cabinet approval on our watch. We were cautious, however, after protests and court challenges, and now because of a new decision by a new government that project is but a memory.

On behalf of all Albertans we sincerely hope the same fate does not befall Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline. Let me remind you that this new federal government put 157 conditions on the project. Northern Gateway had 200. Opposition to Northern Gateway was muted compared to the campaign that has already risen up against Trans Mountain. Let's look at a few of the early vows to block this pipeline, starting with – and this is incredible – people on the Alberta government's own payroll, two members of the oil sands advisory group. I will be looking for confirmation that the Premier has fired both of them by Friday. [interjections] Otherwise her commitment to reaching tidewater is a weak promise indeed.

In your own ND Party federally and in British Columbia a friend of the NDP, Green Party leader Elizabeth May, has said that she'd rather go to jail than see the pipeline built. Holy Leap Manifesto, Batman. [interjections] This is on top of the mayor of Vancouver . . .

The Speaker: Please stop the clock a second.

Hon. members, this is the third time today that I've asked you. Don't make comments when a member is speaking, both sides of the House.

Start the clock again.

Please proceed.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the NDP federally and in British Columbia is fighting against it. On top of this, the mayor of Vancouver and a litany of radical envirogroups are rallying as we speak. Premier, we're cheering for you and for the good of Alberta, but we have seen approvals before, and we have seen them fall away.

Premier, what you promised Albertans in return for your misguided climate change plan is a social licence, and so far you have not delivered. So don't sit on you political laurels and do a victory lap quite yet. [Mr. McIver's speaking time expired] Mr. Speaker, can I finish, please?

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. McIver: Thank you.

The work is just starting, and your promise of a clear social licence path is still broken.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I think that represents the time as I am advised. [interjections] I'm advised that there is no time left, and that's the clock that we follow.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Pipeline Approval

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy has been too reliant on a single market for our resources for too long, and this has led to a roller-coaster economy that affects every Albertan. For too long Conservative governments in Alberta and in Ottawa were too busy being cheerleaders for pipelines instead of rolling up their sleeves and getting down to work. They did nothing on climate change, and they did nothing to work with provinces and communities across these pipeline routes.

That changed yesterday, Mr. Speaker. As the proud daughter of a pipeliner I realize how critical the oil industry is to Alberta's economy . . .

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

Ms Babcock: . . . and, more importantly, to the families and communities whose loved ones work in the industry. Today we continue to see the effects of the global drop in oil, but yesterday's approval of pipeline projects will provide our province with an opportunity to access new markets at better prices. This is another step towards economic independence and another step towards ending Alberta's roller coaster economy and landlock.

Mr. Speaker, our government is paving the way for a new economy based on both economic and environmental sustainability. These two aspects are linked with each other, and Albertans should not have to sacrifice the province's environmental health for a strong economy. Our government's economic and environmental direction is exciting for all Albertans. Many people have told me that they are delighted to see our government work collaboratively with provincial and federal partners to ensure that Albertans' concerns are being heard. More importantly, there's enthusiastic support for our Premier's leadership, which is putting working families first.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, Mr. Speaker: "We could not have approved this project without the leadership of Premier Notley and Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan." As the Deputy Premier stated: "The proof is in the pipeline." Yesterday was a win for Alberta workers, a win for Alberta's economy, and a win for Alberta's environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause]

The Speaker: Hon. members, would you please be seated.

Mr. Clark: Point of order.

The Speaker: What are we at now, six?

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Coal Industry

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are different kinds of coal. Bituminous coal is commonly used to produce electricity in Alberta. Metallurgical, or met., coal is used for steel production and is mainly exported to countries like China, Korea, and Japan. Alberta's met. coal is some of the best in the world and is highly sought after. The coal mines in Grande Cache and Hinton produce met. coal.

I spoke with Gary Taje, the international representative for the United Mine Workers of America's Canadian branch last week. Gary lives in Grande Cache and is a tireless supporter of the local mine and the mineworkers who live there. When I asked Gary if the Alberta government's climate leadership plan was responsible for the closure of the Grande Cache coal mine, his adamant reply was: no, and you can quote me on that.

The Wildrose insists that the free market has all the answers for the economy, but Gary Taje told me that this same free market, not Alberta's climate leadership plan, is responsible for the closure of Grande Cache Coal. The absence of regulation drove the international met. coal price down so far that the mine in Grande Cache was no longer economically viable.

Meanwhile the government of Alberta remains a strong supporter of this mine and is working tirelessly to support this important employer. Now, in spite of continual opposition from the Wildrose and PC members of this House, a plan is moving forward to reopen

the mine, and we are hoping that the miners in the community will be back at their jobs sometime this spring.

The bituminous coal industry, which markets to coal-fired electrical generator plants, will be impacted by both the federal and the provincial climate action plan. They will have the support of this government as we help them with moving on to greener and more sustainable industries.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Carbon Policies

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To understand what's going on outside the dome, all you have to do is go talk to the people who are losing their jobs to really understand the damage the government is having on this province, the hard-working men and women who are quickly losing hope as the government looks to destroy our coal industry and the communities that depend on them. I hear it almost every week, the desperation people have as they try to figure out how to take care of their families. They watch as the value of their homes drop, and they don't know where to turn to next.

2:50

Of course, no one from this cabinet has actually taken the time to step foot into a community like Forestburg or Hanna, to look people in the eye whose livelihoods are destroyed by the NDP. This carbon tax will kill jobs here at home and hurt our ability to compete against the United States, a country opposed to any carbon tax.

I can tell you that the people in my riding do not share the same fascination with the carbon tax as this government does. In fact, they think the carbon tax is just another way to punish people for having the nerve to drive to get their groceries, to commute to work, to take their kids to hockey practice. This tax will hurt everyone. It means less for a family budget. It means less to invest in the construction industry. It means farmers' bills will go up at a time when they can least afford it. Towns and schools will be paying more. And, unbelievably, charities will lose out big time. This is going to especially hurt towns like Forestburg, Hanna, Killam, Hardisty, Wainwright.

If only this government would learn from the mistakes made in other countries like Germany and Australia or, closer to home, in Ontario, with the out-of-control power costs and job losses. Until then Albertans can trust that the Wildrose has their back.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Bill 33

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that it's my pleasure today to request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 33, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, this bill has been circulated to the opposition parties, and I believe that there is consensus on all of the clauses of the bill. Bill 33 contains a number of noncontentious provisions. I'll just briefly list those acts that are affected by this particular bill: the Family Law Act, the Hospitals Act, the Insurance Act, the Notaries and Commissioners Act, the Police Act, the Public Service Act, the Public Service Employee Relations Act, and the Vital Statistics Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have here a screenshot of tweets by Tzeporah Berman from the oil sands advisory group slugging the Kinder Morgan program.

I also have here an opinion poll printed this week, authored by Karen Mahon from the oil sands advisory group entitled Trans Mountain Pipeline, Even If Approved, Won't Be Built.

The Speaker: The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table two documents that I read into the record yesterday, the first one being Failure: Barack Obama Blew \$150 Billion to Increase Renewable Energy Generation By 1%.

The second one is Power Market Watchdog Attacks TransAlta Defence in Price Manipulation Hearing.

The Speaker: Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a letter from Dr. Brent Humphrey indicating that Bill 207 "is unreasonably directive and places an obligation on Council which is inconsistent with the principles of self-governance." There is much more coming.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table the requisite number of copies of three of the articles I referred to today, which said such glowing things about the great progress we've made. I quoted these, including Chris Bloomer, Mr. Braid, and the *Globe and Mail*. [interjection] Just like the leader of the third party prefaced what was in his tablings, that's what I'm doing. I'm happy to present these to the House for tabling.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, this morning when we were debating Bill 30 and the amendments . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, this morning when we were debating Bill 30 and the amendments, I quoted a letter from the Calgary Chamber of commerce, so I'm submitting that letter.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from the Calgary Chamber of commerce that was addressed to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, sent this morning, expressing support for Bill 30 as it is currently written.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and table a document that includes hundreds – hundreds – of signatures expressing concern about the closure of the cardiac rehabilitation centre at the Didsbury hospital. I'm sure the Health minister will have a great opportunity to review the signatures from these concerned residents.

The Speaker: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night during debate on Bill 27 I mentioned that the Market Surveillance Administrator had fined TransAlta \$56 million for meddling in the electrical market. I have the article showing that the government then invested \$46 million of taxpayer money into TransAlta.

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a media release from the government of Saskatchewan where they say that they're number two in this country. The best debt-to-GDP is right here in Alberta. We're twice as good as Saskatchewan, we're four times better than Ontario, and we're five times better than Quebec in terms of having the lowest GDP. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please.

I believe we have numerous points of order raised today. I believe the first was by the Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Cooper: I believe it was, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in question period, what was a very robust opportunity to express opinion in the House, the hon. Minister of Finance used language that was likely to create disorder, imputed false motives of the opposition, used abusive or insulting language likely to create disorder, imputed false motives of another member, and made allegations of another member. While I don't have the benefit of the Blues, I believe that the statement was something very similar to: well, that side of the House would have thrown children out in the street. I am certain that that sort of allegation is unlikely to create order.

It's very simple. The minister just needs to apologize and withdraw, and we can all move on to what I'm sure will be a number of other very important points of order today.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm very familiar with 23(h), (i), and (j), including having produced a how-to video with regard to that. I don't believe that in this case it's suitable.

3:00

The minister was using, perhaps, some hyperbole, which is not disallowed by the rules. He was talking about the policies of the Official Opposition, in that they were not prepared to support adequate funding for schools. You know, it maybe went a little bit beyond what actually would be the case, which would be massive increases in class sizes, should that side's policy be put in place. But it was not directed to any individual members; it was directed to the political approach of the other side. However, I would concede that the hyperbole used in this case may have contributed to a certain amount of disorder on the other side. Not the first time today, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's easier to do than one might think.

With regard to that, I would on behalf of the hon. Finance minister withdraw that particular remark.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. You are correct. It was the first, but it was not the last.

I believe – I'm going to look to the table – Calgary-Lougheed, there were two or three points of order.

Point of Order Anticipation

Mr. Rodney: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were three. I'm happy to roll them all into one for the sake of the table officers and members of the House, yourself. Standing Order 23(e) reads: "A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member . . . anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." It says "or" in between.

Mr. Speaker, all three questions from the Member for Edmonton-Decore were clearly in violation. Bill 30 is on the Order Paper. All three questions had everything to do with that, so I think it's a prima facie example of a point of order. If something is sub judice, you would rule it out of order. The same thing applies here.

I do say that for the folks up in the galleries today – I mean, we've got to ratchet up a notch when it comes to the decorum. I can tell you that during opposition questions we saw a number of members cupping their mouths, yelling. Christmas is coming. Let's tone it down. I implore you, Mr. Speaker. This would be a great example, a good time to make sure that we increase decorum in this House, and I ask you to rule accordingly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Well, with respect, I fail to see the connection between lack of decorum, where the member may have a bit of a point today in particular, and whether or not anticipation was used when a member was asking a question about something, about a bill that's on the Order Paper. The member is quite correct. Section 23(e) does indeed say that something that "anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." It does say that. However, if you dig a little more deeply into the rules – and I'm looking at *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, at page 496 – it says:

In 1997, many questions and even points of order were raised on the issue of questions anticipating Orders of the Day. Previously, questions in anticipation of an Order of the Day were disallowed to prevent the time of the House from being taken up with business to be discussed later in the sitting. After one such point of order, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs recommended that questions no longer be ruled out of order on the sole basis that they anticipated Orders of the Day. Shortly after, although the House had not yet adopted the [practice], Speaker Parent stated that he would follow the Committee's advice. The practice of allowing questions anticipating Orders of the Day has been continued.

Mr. Speaker, you also ruled on this matter on May 26, 2016, and I will just quote from that ruling.

Hon. members should be aware that the rule against anticipation has been interpreted to apply when questions pertain to the specific content of a bill that is up for consideration later that same day. This rule is not violated when there is a question about government policy in relation to the bill.

I have ruled a number of times on this subject.

You go on to refer your members to a number of points in *Hansard* where you had so ruled, Mr. Speaker.

I would submit with the greatest of respect that the questions were in order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The House leader for the Official Opposition.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm almost hesitant to rise for what's about to happen. I think that my hon. colleague

across the way is in fact correct in this point of order. The only real reason that I would rise today is to point out that should you rule on the question of anticipation today, it would put a number of real challenges for us going forward because then the government could basically put any bill on the Order Paper, leave them there for extended periods of time, make bills up, for Pete's sake, because they didn't want to answer a question about pipelines, although they might want to today. Perhaps that was a bad example.

In order for us to be able to continue to ask questions in question period that are robust, perhaps it would have been better if the member referred not specifically to the bill but to the content of the bill. That probably would have been a little more helpful. But in this case I side with my colleague and ask that you don't rule these questions out of order.

The Speaker: Any other members with additional information on the matter? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't need to make recitations because the recitations have been made by the previous speakers, but I would say that it occurs to me, referring to those recitations, that the intention of anticipation is that if a member of the House wants to get clarification on a bill or some information, that's okay, but to use the speaking about a bill on the Order Paper in order to only have unopposed opposition is probably the reason why anticipation is there in the first place. That was clearly what the government was doing today. I mean, I will wait for your wisdom on this, but I would suggest to you that if you let the floodgates open on this, I think you're going to have a whole pile of anticipation coming forward and referring to today's decision should you rule this in order. I will leave it to your wisdom.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on this particular point I, too, remember the rulings that were made back in May of this year. Technically I agree with the point made also by the House leaders for the government and for the opposition that the matter must be scheduled for consideration on this afternoon. In fact, technically, under the point of order that bill is not on the Order Paper today, and I would concur with . . .

Mr. Rodney: It is. It's page 2.

An Hon. Member: Not today. It's for consideration tomorrow.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I don't believe that what happened today was in contravention of the points of order. However, to the hon. member, your questions were getting quite specific. It's related to policy, I believe, rather than particular clauses, and I would ask that the government in future and particularly the hon. member frame your questions in a much more general nature and not to leave an impression that you want a specific matter and you are in fact addressing an issue that will be discussed tomorrow. I thank you for that.

Just to confirm, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, you had three into one, and I think there was one from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Is that correct?

Mr. Cooper: I think it was Calgary-Elbow.

The Speaker: Oh. Calgary-Elbow.

Point of Order

Referring to a Member by Name

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. I will say that it's rare for me to rise on a point of order, but

this is something I've observed in the House on too many occasions. I will reference *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, page 613, references to members. "During debate, Members do not refer to one another by their names but rather by title, position or constituency name in order to guard against the tendency to personalize debate." It goes on to say, "Other party leaders are identified as the leaders of their respective parties," which is a slightly different focus but something worth noting, I would say.

3:10

The Member for Stony Plain in her member's statement did refer to the Premier by name. I have to say that I've noticed this often from the government side, in particular in members' statements and in some questions as well from the backbench, although it certainly happens occasionally here as well. I think it's very important that we, whoever writes our questions or members' statements for us know our parliamentary procedure. Getting information, Mr. Speaker, on the record, I think, is important and okay – of course, that's our job here – but naming names in this House is not. I know often a member's statements – and I admit it's certainly often inadvertent.

Should it be something referenced in a written form, I just want to reference page 614. It's noted:

The Speaker will not allow a Member to refer to another Member by name even if the Member speaking is quoting from a document such as a newspaper article. As the Chair once noted, a Member "cannot do indirectly what cannot be done directly."

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think there's an opportunity here just to remind all members of the House not to refer to other members by name, only, please, to the ministerial position they hold or to the seat that they represent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know anything about people naming names in this House. I don't recall at all a situation last week where I needed to apologize for using the name of someone in the Chamber. I think my hon. colleague the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow, or perhaps more aptly the leader of the Alberta Party, according to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, has raised a very important point around the use of names.

However, just very briefly with respect to members' statements, obviously, we came into a little bit of a rocky patch there around members' statements. It's been a long-standing tradition in this House for members' statements to be uninterrupted, and I think we saw what happens when they can be interrupted. I would encourage both the member to withdraw and apologize and all members of this House to be reminded of what members' statements have been agreed to be for.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, I think there is much being made of something that occurs fairly frequently in this House – and admittedly it shouldn't – which is the use of names. In this particular case the member was reading a direct quote from the Prime Minister in which he attributed their ability to approve the pipelines that were approved yesterday to the leadership of the Premier – and that included her name – and the climate leadership plan of the government of Alberta. He was giving credit to our Premier and to our government and to our climate leadership plan very specifically as something that allowed

the government of Canada to approve the pipelines, including the Kinder Morgan pipeline, which will increase our access, potentially, to Asia and allow the government to get a higher price for the products that we produce. In doing so, the member inadvertently read the name, and people who had written the member's statement on her behalf ought to know that you can't use these names.

It's a good reminder, hardly the most serious transgression that has ever occurred in this House, even today, but on behalf of the hon. member I will withdraw that statement because clearly we are not supposed to use the proper names of members in the House even when reading a document. That much is clear. So, Mr. Speaker, with regard to this matter I will concede the point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

To the principle that the Member for Calgary-Elbow raised, I think it's up to all of us to be conscious of that into the future.

I think the word "robust" would be an understatement with respect to this afternoon. I urge you all to consider your words and actions in this place and whether or not they are always consistently in the best interest of our public that we serve. So I want to remind you that good policy requires good debate.

Were there any other points of order?

Mr. Rodney: The Member for Calgary-Hays had a point of order today.

The Speaker: Okay. I thought he just spoke to one.

Mr. Rodney: No. He was speaking to a different one. He raised a different point of order.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, do you have another point of order?

Mr. Rodney: Yeah. It was on behalf of my hon. colleague. Parliamentary practice dictates that members' statements are uninterrupted in this House, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for reiterating that. Unfortunately, you had to do it a number of times. Unfortunately, my hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays, the leader of the third party, was unable to finish his statement today, and he raised a point of order in the statement following. That being said, I'm happy to withdraw on his behalf.

An Hon. Member: And so you should.

Mr. Rodney: I just did.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 36 An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Why, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a real honour for me to rise today to move Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety, for second reading.

Mr. Speaker, this government has made a commitment to improving safety on Alberta's transportation network. By amending and updating the Traffic Safety Act, we are taking the next step in that commitment. For many years Albertans have been writing

to their government asking for laws which would make the use of off-highway vehicles safer. We have heard from off-highway vehicle associations, from victims fortunate enough to survive, and, sadly, from families who have lost loved ones to head injuries from off-highway vehicle accidents.

There have been many media stories over many years, several within the last few months, calling on the government to require helmets for people who ride off-highway vehicles. Mr. Speaker, too many Albertans are suffering needlessly, and the government can take action. It is taking action. As a government its job is to regularly revisit and update legislation to ensure it encompasses the evolving needs of our changing society.

Some people may ask us, Mr. Speaker, if we believe that a change in the law will impact behaviour and old habits. To answer that question, I would point out Alberta's history with seat belts. In 1986 seat belts were not required in this province. That's not that long ago. At that time only 28 per cent of Albertans used a seat belt. The government of the day, under Premier Getty, introduced legislation in 1978 to improve safety for drivers and passengers alike. Today more than 95 per cent of Albertans buckle up, and the result is more parents making it home to their families and children arriving safely to soccer practice, music lessons, and dance recitals.

The proposed amendments that I will speak about today come from the latest phase of my ministry's review of the Traffic Safety Act. They are the result of consultation with many Albertans, with our stakeholders, and with our traffic safety partners, and they reflect the changing attitudes of off-highway vehicle users and the public.

In Alberta the authority to create laws regarding helmet use for OHVs has been the exclusive responsibility of municipalities. Some municipalities have created such bylaws and were taking steps to manage this issue, but the majority, Mr. Speaker, have not. This inconsistent approach has left uncertainty and inequality in the application of the law, and too many have moved away from safety as a result.

Our first amendment to the Traffic Safety Act today will remove the bylaw-making authority from municipalities and place it where it should be, with the provincial government. This will pave the way for a standard approach to helmets on public land province-wide.

Our second amendment to the Traffic Safety Act today will address the definition of a safety helmet. The off-highway vehicle regulation, or OHVR, will contain standards for safety helmets. This section will clarify that helmets required under the act will be the ones that comply with the standards to be set out in the off-highway vehicle regulation.

The next section will be the actual requirement for helmets to be used when driving, operating, riding in or on, or being towed by an OHV when it is on public land. Public land is any land owned by the public. This will entrench the requirement in provincial law and encourage helmet use province-wide.

3:20

The next section, Mr. Speaker, will address helmet requirements on private property and indigenous lands. The Traffic Safety Act contains an exemption to the requirements for registration and insurance for OHVs operated on private property, and the requirements for helmets will remain consistent with this approach. An individual who is using an OHV on private property that they own or who is doing so on the private property of someone who has granted them permission will not require a helmet. An individual operating an OHV on First Nation or Métis settlement lands will also be exempt from this requirement.

The next section addresses farming and ranching work, Mr. Speaker. Requirements for helmet use on OHVs will not apply to a

person performing farming and ranching work in instances where the Occupational Health and Safety Act or regulations or codes of rules under that act do not require it. This ensures consistency under occupational health and safety law.

The next section grants the Minister of Transportation the authority to make regulations around the use of helmets more generally. For example, this will allow the minister to amend the off-highway vehicle regulation to prohibit people from allowing children to ride an OHV without a helmet. In this example, a parent or guardian who allows a person under 14 to drive or ride an OHV without a helmet would receive a separate charge for that offence. Amendments to the procedures regulations under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act will specify the fines for such offences.

Section 129(d) will grant ministerial authority to make regulations under the OHVR concerning the standards for safety helmets. The next section, 129(e), will grant ministerial authority to create exemptions to the helmet requirement for persons or groups of persons. This will allow regulations to be created, for example, which would exempt individuals using an OHV with both approved seat belts and rollover protection. Further consideration will take place with various groups of people to ensure that the exemptions listed ensure inclusivity. If considered, it would be allowed by this section. This section would also grant the Minister of Transportation the ability to create authority for the registrar of motor vehicle services to create exemptions on a case-by-case basis. If an individual, for example, is physically unable to wear a helmet, the registrar may consider granting an exemption.

Now, the final amendments, addressing regulation-making authority, include a section that would allow for ministerial authority to create regulations under the OHVR which would make the selling of helmets which do not comply with prescribed standards an offence. Amendments to the procedures regulation under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act will specify the fine for such an offence. In the final amendment section 157(1)(a) will give the necessary teeth to the other amendments. This will make the failure to comply with or contravention of the new OHV helmet requirement an offence under part 8 of the Traffic Safety Act.

Mr. Speaker, ATVs and other off-highway vehicles are a part of everyday life for many Albertans. The amendments proposed under Bill 36 will allow this recreational pastime to be enjoyed more safely and will remove ambiguity from safety requirements. We have taken an approach that has been greatly informed by the individuals and stakeholders who know the world of OHVs the best. Our future regulations will ensure that fairness and tradition are honoured. By standardizing the laws and requiring helmets on public land across the province, we are telling the families and loved ones of those affected that we hear their concerns and that we are working to make Albertans safer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to debate, and I encourage members to support Bill 36.

The Speaker: The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. I must say that it looks fairly familiar, but I'm glad you brought it forward. I and my caucus, I know, will be supporting this bill wholeheartedly. I hope it passes through the House smoothly and quickly.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I have some experience with this. I lost my son at 21 because of a brain injury from an OHV. He did have on the best helmet money could buy, so this bill does not guarantee that every life will be saved. But I definitely understand what it's about, and I support it all the way and hope all the members in the House support it.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to speak to the motion? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety. There are a lot of things that need to be improved in the Traffic Safety Act, some that would improve business and some that would improve safety. I'm not sure this is at the top of my list, but here we are. I always get a little reluctant around nanny-state laws because while they will perhaps reduce a few injuries, I am generally supportive of adults taking care of themselves and deciding for themselves the balance in how to keep themselves safe.

The vast majority of off-highway vehicle drivers are a responsible lot. Some already wear helmets; some do not. Others use them when they are going on aggressive rides but not for casual ones. But even the responsible drivers, like the reckless drivers, can have accidents. In Alberta alone, on average, 19 people are killed every year operating OHVs. Between 2002 and 2013 there were 185 people killed; 74 people, 40 per cent, died from head injuries. Nearly 80 per cent of those fatalities involved people not wearing helmets. Each year in Alberta there are close to 6,000 OHV-related emergency room visits, and in 2015 more than 1,000 children under 16 were injured while riding off-highway vehicles. The costs to Alberta Health Services are estimated up to \$50 million annually, Mr. Speaker.

It's true that Alberta is the last Canadian province to legislate off-highway vehicle helmet laws, and this is now it. It is interesting to note that neighbouring American states, however, largely do have OHV laws like this.

Helmets are already mandatory for motorcycle and moped drivers in Alberta, and curiously enough off-highway vehicles can reach the same speeds as motorcycles and mopeds. Cyclists aged 18 and younger are required by law to wear an approved bicycle helmet.

Bill 36 is a compromise, giving a nod to rural Alberta, the family farm, and the freedom-loving enjoyment of our private-property rights. This is just common sense. Farmers and ranchers will be exempt from wearing helmets on their own land or land they lease, like the grazing leases, or lands they have implied consent to be on or even crossing a provincial highway to get to the other side. Bill 36 will only apply to Crown lands, but the moment a farmer takes his OHV to go riding on forestry trails, on Crown land, in the eastern slopes, or the great Athabasca sand dunes, helmets will apply. Even those involved in the operation of market gardens will get an exemption.

Bill 36 is really not much different from the OHV laws in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, that protect private-property rights. In Saskatchewan helmets are not required if the land is owned or occupied by the operator or the passenger or by a member of the immediate family of either of them. In British Columbia helmets are only needed on prescribed private land, and since there is no prescribed private land, helmets are not really required.

Manitoba is a bit odd all around. Helmets are mandatory. Helmets are not mandatory if the off-highway vehicle is being used in the course of farming, commercial fishing, hunting or trapping operations, or if the vehicle has a roll cage with seat belts. If you are in a remote community in Manitoba and are the owner or operator or a Manitoba Hydro employee working north of the 53rd parallel or an employee working under the Provincial Parks Act, you are also exempt. A driver's licence is required to operate an OHV in Manitoba unless in a remote community. Hunting and trapping operations are exempt in Manitoba. There might be an opportunity

here to squeeze another exemption into Bill 36, and I'd like to hear from the minister what he thinks of that opportunity.

3:30

Up in the Northwest Territories municipal bylaws in Inuvik mandate that all persons involved with an OHV wear a helmet. Over in Yellowknife the municipal bylaw mandates helmets for children under age 18 and that they must be at least 14 years old to operate an OHV on the road. Now, wouldn't it be nice if we could legally drive our quads in Alberta on the shoulder of a provincial highway?

Going into the United States, in Montana helmets are encouraged, but there is no law. All riders who are under the age of 16 and over the age of 11 are required to complete an approved safety course, though, and carry the Montana safety certificate with them while riding on public roads open to full-sized vehicles. Over in Alaska municipal bylaws in various communities like Anchorage and Valdez mandate helmets. OHVs also cannot operate on private land unless they are registered.

North Dakota requires those under age 18 to wear a helmet. All riders who are under the age of 17 and over the age of 12 are required to complete an approved safety course and carry the North Dakota ATV safety certificate with them while riding on public lands. Idaho also mandates under-18s to wear helmets.

Washington state has no rules for those operating on their own land. There are also exemptions for an OHV used in production of agricultural and timber products on and across lands owned, leased, or managed by the owner or operator of the off-road vehicle or the operator's employer.

Oregon mandates that under-18s must wear a helmet. Exemptions to the law exist when the OHV is used exclusively in farming, agricultural, or forestry operations or for nurseries or Christmas tree growing operations, is being used on land owned or leased by the owner of the vehicle, or that has a roof or roll bar.

Mr. Speaker, I cite legislation from these neighbouring jurisdictions to help this House recognize that there are many differing pieces of legislation and different forms of OHV legislation used throughout Canada and in the northern states. I think we see common themes here across Canada and neighbouring American jurisdictions that have been incorporated into Bill 36. Under Bill 36 all ages, whether driving, riding as a passenger, or being towed while on Crown land, will need to have a helmet on. Under Bill 36 hunting and trapping operations will not be exempt.

Mr. Speaker, knowing Alberta Transportation, I know that stats are going to be kept, and I can only hope that the results of this bill will be a reduction in fatalities and injuries requiring hospital visits. To the Minister of Transportation: the safety requirement could be done a little better.

I look forward to debate in Committee of the Whole, but right now I am in support of Bill 36. Thank you.

The Speaker: Any members under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A brain injury happens in an instant, but it changes lives forever: that is a quote from ARBI, the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured. They go on in that same quote to say that every day they see the survivors. "We see that every day, the incredible toll on both the individuals and on the family unit after an accident happens. ATV helmet legislation is such a great initiative, and it is my view that if it helps prevent even one person from serious brain injury, it will be worth while." That quote was from Mary Ellen Neilson of ARBI.

Another quote, Mr. Speaker: "I've dealt with dozens of traumatic brain injuries in my career, and I have seen first-hand the devastating effects that they have on individuals, their families, and their communities. Requiring ATV operators to wear helmets will not only save lives but will reduce the burden head injuries place on families and on our health care system. Any law that would prevent even one of these devastating injuries has my total support." That's from a constituent of mine as well, who is here, actually, watching the proceedings right now. Those quotes of support just show the devastation to come from an off-highway vehicle injury.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has experienced that first-hand, and, you know, I feel sorry for his loss as well. That is why I am so proud, Mr. Speaker, to be cosponsoring this bill and so proud to have been able to work with the hon. Minister of Transportation as well as all my caucus colleagues on this particular bill. I believe that the bill in its current form has done a great job of balancing the needs for safety as well as having appropriate exemptions that Alberta has been used to in the past, as the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock had pointed out.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will mandate the use of helmets for all off-highway vehicles except that there are going to be a couple of notable exceptions. One of them would be for private land. As many members of the House would know, when you're on your own private land, it is impractical to enforce a helmet law in that particular case. There would also be an exemption for ranching. If you are using your ATV for ranching purposes, we would not explicitly put on any sort of mandatory helmet use. However, we would use it consistent with occupational health and safety. As well, First Nations and Métis land would also be exempt. That's to respect our aboriginal peoples. Just like with the private land before, that land is theirs, and we respect their ability to legislate on their land as well.

We also, Mr. Speaker, are going to have the ability to allow regulatory exemptions by the Ministry of Transportation into the future so that as technology moves forward with potential safety improvements to ATVs that we have not thought of yet, it would allow the minister of the day to take that into consideration and be able to make a quick change to perhaps not require helmets in those particular scenarios.

I'm sure that if any members of the House have any particular exemptions, the minister would open to looking at them. A perfect example of what that might be is if an ATV has a roll bar and seat belts. I could see making an exemption in that particular scenario. Of course, we will be further consulting with outdoorsmen as well as members of the off-highway vehicle community for other possible exemptions.

But do not let these practical exemptions take away from the seriousness of the issue. We would all like Albertans to wear a helmet. As was mentioned, 19 deaths a year, 768 hospitalizations, 5,885 ER visits: 220,000 people answered the survey. Those are all examples where, even if the helmet was able to help in some of those, it would have been of great benefit to our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are some questions that I'm sure will come up, and I believe that the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock sort of alluded to them. I'm going to talk first, though, about the enforcement of this particular legislation, the practical bits. The RCMP, local police departments, conservation officers, and other agents of the office of the Solicitor General would be responsible for enforcing the use of helmets for ATV riders as they go about their business out in the wilderness. We don't expect that there will be any extra resources needed to enforce this legislation as those law enforcement agencies are already out protecting the public in rural areas and other areas where ATVs are used.

Also, we plan that if this bill were to pass the House, we would also put forward an advertising blitz to make sure that all Albertans who partake in using off-highway vehicles, whether it be ATVs or motorcycles, are aware of the new requirement and the exemptions as they may relate to them. The penalty, of course, for not wearing a helmet would still be \$155, as it currently is.

3:40

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fairly clear what public land is and what private land is. I just want to clarify, of course, that public land is all Crown land, and that includes areas that have been designated for public off-highway vehicle use: public roadways, highways, rights-of-way, and the like. I'd like to point out that certain municipalities have in fact already mandated that you have to have a helmet while using off-highway vehicles. Where it was left up to each individual municipality to mandate helmet use, this legislation would provide a blanket requirement across the province, which I think makes enforcement a lot easier and gets the message across that we do want users of ATVs to wear helmets.

One more clarification is that, of course, some of us like to go off-roading as well with vehicles such as your favourite, you know, four-by-four, be it an F-150, a Dodge Ram, or your other favourite super ultra mega cab-type pickup truck. In that particular case, Mr. Speaker, if it is a plated vehicle, the safety requirements as if the vehicle was an on-road vehicle would apply. So if you happen to be out in your Dodge, your Ford F-150, or your Chevy, whatever it may be, assuming that you are wearing your seat belt and that your vehicle otherwise meets the rest of the Traffic Safety Act, then you would of course not need to wear a helmet in that particular case.

However, Mr. Speaker, if you are a real four-by-four enthusiast and have built a homemade off-road rock crawler, for example, that you could not plate and insure, then you would most definitely need to wear a helmet, and having seen those in person, with the roll bars that are everywhere, you would probably really want to as well.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not about stopping the fun or about limiting activities of those Albertans who enjoy going out for an ATV ride, whether it be in the rural parts of Alberta or those of us who live in big cities who enjoy Alberta's outdoors with some motorized fun. This is not at all about stopping that. It is about making sure that we all go home to talk about the good times from a ride and not about the tragic injury that may happen during it.

With that, I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate. That is all.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any questions of the Member for Calgary-Currie under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, Government House Leader, do you wish to close debate?

Mr. Mason: To close debate, Mr. Speaker, yes. Thank you very much. I want to thank all of the hon. members for their contributions in talking about many of the aspects of safety, the impact on our health care system, the impact on families.

I want to extend my condolences to the member. That's a very sad thing, that I was not aware of. It really brings home, I think, for me, what we're trying to do with this bill.

I just left out one piece that I think is so important. It's not related directly to the bill, but it's the whole question of public education. That's something that's part of our program around this bill, Mr. Speaker. There's going to be an effort to educate people about the need to wear helmets even where we've not made it mandatory. We've taken a fairly conservative approach with respect to the

application of this bill. [interjection] It's a small "c"; sometimes it's even a good thing.

What we wanted to do was use this bill to move towards public education, to move towards the situation where in almost every instance people choose to wear a helmet.

You know, it's a difficult philosophical piece that the hon. member has talked about, the people's choice. We're all part of a bigger community, Mr. Speaker. If a father doesn't wear a helmet but has children, is there a role, then, for the rest of the society to have some say, especially since the society as a whole has to bear the health care costs or the costs of supporting a family without a breadwinner?

These are complicated and difficult issues, Mr. Speaker, and I think we've struck the right balance. We've struck the right balance in this particular piece of legislation, and we recognize the important role of education, that has to go side by side with legislation as we move toward trying to make sure that people and families are protected as they enjoy Alberta's outdoors, as they go about the work that is the backbone of this province, whether it be in agriculture or ranching. All of those things are important.

I want to thank all members who've spoken from the different parties for their support of this bill. I'm looking forward to hearing some amendments when we get to Committee of the Whole because this is by no means the final answer, in my opinion, but I think it is the right balance for now for Alberta. I encourage all members to support this bill at second reading.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms. Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act

The Chair: We are at amendment A1. Are there any further amendments or questions or comments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was cut off halfway through my speech the last time, so I thought that everybody would want to hear the rest of it.

An Hon. Member: It was a riveting speech.

Mr. Cyr: It is actually quite riveting. I will say that. I will have to reread a part of it so that I kind of catch you up to where I was.

An Hon. Member: It can't be a long part.

Mr. Cyr: It won't be a long part. I agree with the member there.

The Alberta Assessors' Association also provided comments I'd like to read into the record. Quote: the association has completed a careful analysis of this issue and does not support the creation of a central agency to prepare industrial assessments; we do recognize that stakeholders, including the association, have identified a number of problems that should be addressed. Unquote.

I believe that part of my responsibility as an elected member is to ensure that these positions from different stakeholders are a part of the government's considerations, especially on a bill that is as large and omnibus as Bill 21.

3:50

Based largely on the feedback from stakeholders I have compiled in conjunction with my colleagues a number of recommendations on centralizing industrial property assessment. Point 1: add clear language that exempts municipalities from paying the requisition to fund the centralized assessment body if an industrial property owner does not pay their property taxes. The next point: ensure that assessors are based throughout the province and are not centralized in Alberta's metropolitan centres. Point 3: allow municipalities the right to appeal assessments on industrial properties assessed by the province. The next point: create an independent third-party audit function so that the province is not auditing its own assessments. Next point: require annual updates to regulated assessment rates. Another point: allow municipalities to apply to opt out of the centralized assessment. The final point: the creation of an assessment commissioner with the mandate that includes training assessors and industry representatives.

Again, the MGA review and this discussion have been an enormous undertaking by the ministry, their staff, elected officials of all varieties, and many other stakeholders. I want to thank everyone who's been involved with this review and its broad implications on local government, everyone who has worked to put this extremely important act together.

Now I would like to go into the amendments a little further. The government has come back with serious amendments on the topic of centralized assessment. For the most part these seem pretty standard such as amending the act to correctly spell "modernized." It's ironic that they don't have spell-check. Nonetheless, we do need to review them.

Line 34 on the duty to provide information, section 27. This subsection stipulates that it's the taxpayer's obligation to provide assessors with information for assessing property and performing other duties under parts 9 to 12 of the act. The government has provided us with the rationale that this amendment broadens the assessor's access to information, ensuring that the assessor can get any information needed to perform the duties of assessors as per the act or regulations. We want to be sure that we are providing the provincial assessor with the appropriate power, and I think companies, municipalities, and Albertans as a whole are looking for assurances that we are not providing them with overreaching powers. Subsequently, item 35 is where the bulk of the details for these powers are going to be defined in the regulations. This is something that we will need more clarity on.

I do want to say that with the input that we have had from our municipalities, overall Bill 21 is something that I see as moving Alberta in the right direction, but we have had some concerns that our municipalities have brought forward, and not all of them have been addressed.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A1? The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll be fairly brief on this. I just wanted to get up and speak a little bit to municipally controlled corporations. We had a few discussions with the folks from AUMA and AAMD and C regarding this. I look at the new House amendments, and it looks like most of their concerns have been addressed.

I'd just like to urge a little bit of caution when it comes to municipal governments getting into corporations. That being said, municipalities have to be free to pursue other sources of reliable funding, especially in these times of economic decline and uncertainty, but at the same time we need to have adequate consultation

with residents to make sure that we're not getting into a situation where we're putting taxpayers at risk and the municipality at risk.

Specifically, one action that we had was an article by a *Herald* reporter in the *Elk Valley Herald* that just came out last week. It's dated November 23. I'd be happy to table that if it's required.

Harvey Steblyk and Don Hughes representatives from Fortis met with council at a budget meeting on Thursday, Nov. 10.

On April 19, council passed a motion to proceed with the sale of the community owned electrical distribution system to FortisAlberta.

The motion ends the community engagement phase of the sale process and gives Fortis the signal to draft the terms and conditions of an agreement.

Mayor Blair Painter and council were unanimous in their decision.

"Our system is tired and it's time we passed it on to someone who knows how to run it," said Councillor Bill Kovach. "Especially with the shape it's in. So I'm in favour of this resolution."

"As a municipality, we don't have the capacity to run an electrical system," said Councillor Char Cartwright.

Council considered selling the municipally owned electrical distribution system after Fortis undertook a review of the municipal utility system, at council's request.

Now, one of the amendments that was made was the control of corporations, section 13. This section lays out the requirements for the establishment of a controlled corporation. This section is amended to indicate that a council must be satisfied that the legislated process of the MCC as outlined in this section has been met. The wording requires that the purpose of the MCC includes that "the profits and dividends of the controlled corporation will provide a direct benefit to the residents of the municipality or group of municipalities that controls it." Now, that's a very important statement. We don't want people getting into corporations just for the sake of raising funds. It should have some net benefit to the municipality.

The second one I'd like to talk about was item 6, control of corporations. The MGA includes a requirement for both due diligence study and business plan prior to the establishment of a controlled corporation. The proposal is to remove the requirement for due diligence study as well as the accompanying regulation-making authority for it in section 75.5(1)(c). The rationale given for that amendment is that stakeholders indicated that the requirement for a due diligence study in addition to a business plan was an overly onerous and unnecessary requirement. Any significant elements of the due diligence study that are not captured in the business plan can be made a requirement in the accompanying regulation. That puts us over to the control of corporations regulations. I agree. I think that if you do a proper business plan, you are going to cover most of the due diligence in that. Again I would caution that they have to make sure that they have the buy-in from the residents and ratepayers in their municipality.

As always, while we have to consider what's best for the municipal government in place – and those people are elected to make those decisions – we also have to be very cautious about the taxpayer. I would caution the minister and her department. While, like I say, municipalities need to be free to exercise what they think is best, I would caution getting involved in any corporation where the significant losses could bankrupt the municipality.

Now, we talk about for-profit corporations. There are a lot of for-profit corporations out there that during these downturns have become not-for-profit corporations, and they end up in liquidity and bankruptcy. It's a terrible thing for a municipality to go through. I would just exercise caution. Like I said, I support municipalities

being able to pursue getting into corporations if it's something that's going to help them provide stable funding for their municipality, but at the same time we have to be very, very careful that we don't overextend ourselves, get into a situation like they did in the Crowsnest Pass, where you have a community that's in a corporation and just does not have what it takes to maintain that corporation and keep it profitable.

That being said, I will sit down and leave it to the next speaker. Thank you very much.

4:00

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: You got it. Appreciate that. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm once again happy to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, today. For the last time, I think, I'll be speaking about municipal development plans and intermunicipal development plans. I'm sure everybody will be happy to hear that this may be the last kick at the cat.

Now, as a former councillor of a rural municipality I do have an opinion about the Modernized Municipal Government Act. I think it likely is time to update the document. This project started many years ago. The previous government determined that the act probably needed to be upgraded, and today's government has agreed that that should be so, and it has been continuing. It is a good thing.

There's certainly been a lot of information gathered in that amount of time. In fact, input toward the Municipal Government Act update has passed from one government to another, as I said, so it's been in the works for a while. Ideas by municipalities and by citizens about changes to the Municipal Government Act are probably the same no matter who's running the show. I would suggest that it's about municipalities and how they govern themselves and certainly not about any particular ideology.

At any rate, municipal governments have a profound effect on people's everyday lives. The government that has to live by this document is the government that is closest to the people. They make decisions that affect their municipalities and those that live within their borders, and of course it's important that municipal governments meet residents' needs.

It is also clear, I hope, Madam Chair, that the document that we have been debating here for the last few weeks is a very important piece of legislation. Municipalities across the province must live by the words written into this document. This particular legislation determines their day-to-day function, and I sincerely hope that everyone in the room thinks about that as they are making decisions on changes that are proposed within these walls. What we discuss here today is not governance for ourselves. The decisions made for this document are governances for our hometowns and communities that we like to visit during the summer months for farmers' markets and on and on. Those are the places that we make decisions for when we change the Municipal Government Act. Once again, this is important.

Now, I've already talked to members of the House about intermunicipal collaborative frameworks, or ICFs, and I'm going to leave that one alone. Municipal development plans and intermunicipal development plans, with Bill 21 introduced, are now tied in with intermunicipal collaborative frameworks.

An Hon. Member: It's a mouthful.

Mr. Schneider: It's not a mouthful; it's just a matter of being able to keep it all straight.

A municipal development plan, or MDP, is something that was previously only required for municipalities with a population of

3,500 or more. The municipal development plan is a long-range statutory planning document that serves as a guide for the future growth and development of the community. Think of it as a document that relates to a municipality from its borders inward. The municipal development plan guides the community on its path forward towards greater sustainability by integrating the community's vision with municipal planning and decision-making. The municipal development plan sets the municipality's overall policy direction for community land-use decisions.

Aligned with the MDP are generally all planning documents such as area structure plans and land-use bylaws of the particular municipality. Now, the other thing about stat plans such as the municipal development plans is that at the end of the day they must align with the Alberta Land Stewardship Act's regional plans. In no way, shape, or form can the plans not be consistent with each other.

Okay. An intermunicipal development plan, or IDP, on the other hand, is a plan adopted by two or more municipalities to address land-use and development issues in an area of mutual concern. Think of it more as a municipality's fringes meeting with another municipality's fringes. Those municipalities now would have to think a little bit more outside of their borders in a thoughtful manner to determine what is best for that particular region as a whole. An IDP recognizes that the fringe area of an urban municipality is subject to different pressures, different problems, and different opportunities, more different than those of a strictly urban or strictly rural setting. With the passing of Bill 21, which I have no doubt will actually happen, all municipalities are now required to undertake the preparation of an intermunicipal development plan, which should help to avoid future land-use conflicts and create rational, sustainable land-use practices.

Now, as we continue to discuss this bill and municipal development plans and intermunicipal development plans in particular, I would ask us all to bear in mind the diverse municipalities within this province, especially in terms of size. Just for an example, we have the city of Calgary, with 1.2 million people, and the city of Edmonton, with about a million. We have other cities such as Red Deer and Lethbridge with around 100,000 residents. Then there are large counties like Parkland county with a population of 30,000, smaller counties like Vulcan county with around 4,000 residents. This province has more than 100 towns and around 100 villages, too, which might only have a couple of hundred people. Carmangay, for instance, in my riding, has 367 people. Milo, another village in my riding, has 122 people.

The reason I'm saying these numbers is because I want to point out that government tries to put legislation together that will treat all municipalities in the same way – "have the same outcome," I guess, would be a better way of putting it – but municipalities have vastly different levels of capacity. Small villages, obviously, don't have the same number of staff to deal with administration and planning the same way a larger municipality may. Small municipalities and communities have their place in Alberta just like the large ones, so we must always keep that thought in our minds when we make decisions that affect all municipalities in the province.

I think that is why the AUMA and AAMD and C, while they do support the requirement for all municipalities to have a municipal development plan, for example, wanted to see the municipalities given five years to complete them. They also were hoping that the province was on the cusp of offering them support of some kind to assist the municipalities with capacity challenges. Madam Chair, some villages often have one member, one person that does just about everything, from answering the phone to making up the agenda for council meetings, hiring the part-time help, and on and on. That one staff member is going to be pretty busy also taking on a municipal development plan, an intermunicipal development

plan, and an intermunicipal collaborative framework. Some of these statutory planning documents require significant resources and co-ordination with other municipalities.

I took a look at the Internet last night, as I was making up this edge-of-your-seat speech, for municipal development plans for small communities like I've described. I also looked for intermunicipal development plans for small communities, and I couldn't find any. Now, I don't want to stand here and say that there's not such a thing in Alberta. I'm prepared to say that there may indeed be statutory plans for smaller municipalities somewhere. I would suggest that they're probably few and far between.

4:10

I guess my point is that I have found lots of municipal development plans and lots of intermunicipal development plans for towns all across Alberta, but these things are rather large documents. The town of Coaldale and Lethbridge county's intermunicipal development plan was put together by a consultant. Brazeau county and the town of Drayton Valley's intermunicipal development plan was put together by a consultant. The town of Cochrane's municipal development plan was also pieced together by a consultant. I'm sure everybody can see that there's a bit of a trend here.

I guess the point is that from what I can see, the government's discussions about municipal development plans being small, one-page documents and intermunicipal development plans being rather small as well aren't something that's happened very much before in Alberta. I can't find any of those small municipal statutory plans anywhere that I looked on the Internet. I'm not saying that they're not there, but I didn't come across any that had been made on behalf of a 300- or 400-person village.

There are a lot of consultants that have made these documents for larger municipalities. Not many have for smaller municipalities or communities, which leads, I guess, to the big concern: how will the Carmangays and the Milos and the Big Valleys of Alberta pay for these documents? I'm hoping that the government will soon come out and say how it is that they'll be helping smaller municipalities comply with these requirements. If each village has to hire consultants to help them put together an ICF, an MDP, and an IDP, where does that money come from? It's kind of clear that nobody has built their own stat docs yet. It sure looks like they are all done professionally from what I can find.

I think the minister said yesterday that the government is not planning to provide financial support to municipalities but will instead provide assistance by posting instructions and templates online. Something like that. Something somewhere along that line. "Will the government be setting up a helpline that municipal staff can call when they need support?" is another question. I have no doubt that these things would help, but I'm sure that municipalities are hoping for more. Another question, I guess: is the government going to offer some financial assistance along with the proposed templates and, hopefully, some support help in the offices as well? Madam Chair, municipalities need these details as soon as possible, of course, so that they can start making arrangements, especially since the government is giving municipalities only two years to get some of these documents, certainly, close to fruition.

I would say that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties wants to know: will there be flexibility in how detailed a plan must be to account for different municipal sizes and capacities? To give you an idea, because municipalities with more than 3,500 people already have a municipal development plan, the city of Calgary's MDP is 182 pages long, a city with a population of 1.2 million. That's 6,500 residents per page. Vulcan county's MDP is 44 pages long. That's around 90 residents per page. Of course, I'm being a little bit tongue-in-cheek as I run those numbers

by you, but I'm trying to illustrate how municipalities have varying capacities. You know, Milo, with 122 people: there are several villages like that, that continue to keep their charters. What's the minimum required length of these stat docs?

Big cities might pay more for their planning documents in absolute terms, but I'm talking about what proportion of their revenue municipalities will need to spend. This is concerning to the small municipalities that make up rural Alberta.

I guess another question is: will the provincial government reject inadequate planning documents? I believe that the government needs to properly express and manage expectations. Small towns and, certainly, small villages are concerned about these things.

Madam Chair, the AAMD and C consulted with its members – the Minister of Municipal Affairs certainly has the same documents that I have access to – and it says that while members recognize that benefits can result from collaboration, these new requirements for intercollaborative frameworks – IDPs and MDPs – may push smaller communities closer to dissolution. Don't get me wrong. I know everyone here would say that that is something that they certainly don't want to see.

If the government announces meaningful supports to help create these ICFs, MDPs, and IDPs, certainly for those municipalities that are small and are hanging on to their charters, I would think that would be a good start. Just as households should think ahead and plan for their future, it is important for municipalities to consider how they will grow and develop over the long term. I think a community or a municipality would agree with that.

Just one more thought from AAMD and C and AUMA. Both of those municipal associations are intricately involved with municipalities all across the province. They are constantly interacting with those that they support. They believe that they may very well be positioned better than anyone to offer the help required by municipalities as they transition into a time in their history where they need to have three statutory documents lined up within three years.

Those associations are prepared to help, and they believe that the province should allow them to continue their involvement with municipalities by being given the wherewithal to provide templates that are aligned with the Modernized Municipal Government Act requirements so that they can help their smaller communities that sorely lack capacity for something like this. That would of course take some funding but also may provide the government the ability to shift some funding from the Municipal Affairs office. I guess the point is that potentially it could happen with no new funding.

While I'm generally in favour of municipalities developing IDPs and MDPs, I do think that we need to recognize that these visioning exercises have limitations. I hope that this government will soon provide us and municipalities with more details and address the concerns that are consistently being expressed by those associations that represent those municipalities.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Westhead: Are you going to make an amendment or just keep yapping?

Mr. Cooper: Did you say: are you going to keep yapping? I'm not entirely . . .

The Chair: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, did you wish to speak to the bill?

Mr. Cooper: Oh yeah. Sorry. I was just speaking to the member across the way who was making accusations of the opposition

yapping. I'm not sure that that's very helpful to the conduct of the Assembly.

Mr. Hanson: A point of impoliteness.

Mr. Cooper: A point of impoliteness, yes.

You know what? I am going to speak to a couple of issues, and I hope to move an amendment. I will bring it to the House shortly. Specifically, I wanted to chat on the issue of council training. Bill 21 speaks specifically about council training and the need for that. I know that AAMD and C and AUMA both spoke about this particular issue in their feedback to the government.

There is a wide range of opinions around council training as to whether it should be mandatory or not. Now, I know that in this bill it isn't mandatory, but when we have reached out to a lot of municipalities, they have expressed some concern around the possibility of those who might be elected who would choose not to take that training. That certainly presents a concern for many municipalities, so I think that's certainly something that we should consider. The training that ought to be provided – and I know that municipalities have varying degrees of ability to provide training. I also know that there is some good work that's done by each of the associations with respect to training.

4:20

The one thing, though, that we do have the opportunity to do is try and assist municipalities in creating a similar training opportunity. The AUMA and AAMD and C also support training for folks. I certainly know as a former municipal councillor that in the early days of a term and particularly in that first term there is a significant amount of information to be received. That includes a wide swath around the operations of the municipality, the finances of the municipality, the different types of documents, planning documents that one needs to get up to speed on, the areas in which a municipal councillor has influence or ability, the areas in which a municipal councillor can act or vote, and the areas in which they ought not act or vote. A lot of these things, if a municipal councillor isn't appropriately trained, can present a lot of very significant concerns to both a municipality as well as to that councillor.

I think that it is imperative not just that we ensure that councillor training is available, which is what the bill does. It says that training should be offered and, as a result, that there would be the opportunity for a councillor to object and not get the training. I know that the government is trying to strike a balance here, and I appreciate that balance, but in the vast majority of municipalities that have reached out to us, they have asked that the provincial government ensure that the training would then be mandatory.

I will just briefly take a seat and then in a few moments propose an amendment to that. Then we will get back to this amendment that we'll be proposing in just a couple of minutes with respect to mandatory training. Then also I intend to provide some comments about the role of the ombudsman and a couple of other issues, and then I hope that we are able to move this piece of legislation forward.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Actually, Madam Chair, I was very interested in hearing what the hon. member from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was saying about this and would love to be able to have him carry on with his comments in due time, of course. [interjections] It's good to hear that the members opposite are now awake and listening with rapt attention to what we have to talk about today.

Anyways, again, I'd like to yield my time to the House leader.

Mr. Cooper: Oh. Thank you. Incredible job on behalf of my hon. colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner. I would like to move an amendment on behalf of the Member for Little Bow.

The Chair: This will be subamendment SA6.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that everyone is so keenly interested in the issue of mandatory training versus optional training. I think that the impassioned speech that I gave just moments ago should speak for itself, but I'll read the amendment. Mr. Schneider to move that amendment A1 to Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended in clause (a) of part D, in the proposed section 201.1, by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) A councillor must attend orientation training that meets the requirements in the regulations within 90 days after taking the oath of office.

If I might just add a brief comment, it is that this amendment has been inspired by the vast number of municipalities who have reached out to us and said that they would prefer councillors that are elected to be required to receive training, not that training would be available. Training has been available over a long period of time. When I was first elected in 2010, the training was available but not mandatory. Subsequently, municipalities have said that they would much prefer to see that this would be mandatory as opposed to optional.

I have listened to members of the municipally elected community from across the province, and I simply ask that the members of the House do the same.

The Chair: Just a comment before we move on to the next speaker. I remind you that earlier today we already had the issue of using members' names in the House even when reading from a document. So just a reminder, please, hon. members, to respect that.

Are there any members wishing to speak to subamendment SA6? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate your attention this afternoon to one of the more interesting topics, perhaps, that we deal with from time to time in the House. Councillor training is something that's near and dear to my heart. That's for sure.

In the early 2000s I was able to go to the association convention with the AAMD and C members and have the opportunity to take a lot of the courses and various sessions they had there. It was certainly extremely helpful for my new role. As well, we had an awful lot of sessions that our municipality sponsored and held within our premises from time to time, and we had various sessions of training that were provided by various solicitors and other counsel that came in to provide us with some very, very good background on how to do things, not only as a councillor but also as a member of an appeal board and on a committee, et cetera, et cetera. This is just the basic foundation of what a person really needs to do that job effectively.

I have to say that it is always amazing to me that in the past, prior to getting a lot of experience here, I looked back on that and wondered: how in the world did a lot of municipalities carry on without that benefit? How could they possibly judge what would happen to people? How could they deal with serious matters without some sort of training? It seemed just so ridiculous. I like to compare it, often as not, and sometimes I draw this analogy, and I'm thinking of the Justice minister, who's here in the House today, actually. When you look at the judicial system, you have to be someone that has passed the bar exams and everything to be a

lawyer, and then they have to have those qualifications to be a judge. They are judging the lives of people, just like councillors are. What a contradiction that these people are not required to have this basic training.

4:30

I would urge the members in the House to please have a look at this amendment. I realize that the department had quite a good amount of discussion on it and consultation, I realize that a lot of people spoke their mind on it throughout the summer, and I realize that we did talk about it in the briefings, but I do believe that just having to offer it doesn't really meet the bar. It doesn't really get you where you need to go. I think we need to make it mandatory.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the members for bringing up this issue because I certainly heard a lot of feedback as well about it over the summer. Certainly, Albertans across the province have expressed their keen support for the need for training for elected councillors after every election and by-election. Everyone values the important work of our elected representatives and wants them to be properly armed with knowledge and skills to carry out the responsibilities of running their municipalities. I would say that no one in this room is in doubt of that.

However, the provincial government believes strongly in the principle of local accountability and does not want to step in as big brother holding the stick to mandate councillors to take the training. These councillors were chosen by the people through the democratic vote, and we do not want to compromise that very important choice.

Instead, we want to ensure that decision lays at the proper level of governance on that, and we want to empower local councils and their citizens to hold their elected representatives to account through the new codes of conduct that will be required. These codes of conduct will reflect the needs of their communities and may include sanctions against councillors who choose not to take the training. The only thing a council may not do is dismiss a councillor.

We believe that all municipal councillors want to do the best work possible for their citizens and will be eager for more opportunities to learn about their vital role in Alberta. However, the choice as to whether to mandate them to attend the session: that decision does not rest in this House but in the decisions of the individual councils across this province.

With that, I will not be supporting this subamendment. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other speakers?

Mr. Hunter: I actually do have something to say about this, Madam Chair. I have to say that when we first took a look at this – and I understand the intent of this amendment – the first thought I had was that this will be an opportunity for the government to add more bureaucracy and more layers to the government, where municipalities would be responsible and forced to pay for this training. I have to say that at first I was not in favour of it. I'm quite surprised to hear that the government is not in favour of increasing the size of government. You know what? This is a very interesting day.

But I do have to say that I see the value to making sure that these councillors receive the necessary training and that they receive the proper training so that they can represent the people to the best of their ability. That's why I actually will be supporting this subamendment. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other speakers to subamendment SA6?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on subamendment SA6 lost]

The Chair: We are now back on amendment A1 to Bill 21. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on the amendments?

[Motion on amendment A1C carried]

[Motion on amendment A1E carried]

[Motion on amendment A1K carried]

[Motion on amendment A1X carried]

[Motion on remaining parts of amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: We are now back on Bill 21. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak on one of the largest pieces of legislation this government has introduced, Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act. With regard to the overall consultation process my colleagues and I were pleased that it included multiple stakeholders that all had a wide variety of experience and expertise. The consultation process was robust and included a wide range of stakeholder engagement. The government didn't just leave the consultation process until after the bill was written. They engaged stakeholders throughout the development, and this was encouraging to see. We heard a variety of positive remarks about the consultation process from many of the stakeholders, and the government should be commended for their diligence in this regard.

Our team has been very thorough with this piece of legislation, and we have reached out to major industry groups, municipal advocates, taxpayer groups, think tanks, small-business owners, nonprofits, and every municipality in Alberta. We think that a piece of legislation this comprehensive and one that impacts so many people's lives should be given the proper time and consideration. Bill 21 affects the roads we drive on, where we live, what type of home to build or buy, and the taxes we pay. It is crucial that we get this legislation right the first time. After so many years of work it's easy to lose focus as we enter into the home stretch, but as elected officials we have a duty to our constituents and to Albertans to give this bill the proper scrutiny.

One concern of mine is that with all the hours that have been already poured into this bill, the good work that's already been completed will be unravelled by this government's attempt to meet its own narrow timeline to proclamation. I worry that in order to meet this self-imposed summer 2017 deadline, too many details are being left to regulations, continuing in the previous government's bad habit of backroom deals done around the cabinet table and out of earshot of those who will be affected by them most.

There are a number of issues that I do take some exception to, however. For starters, I was disappointed, albeit unsurprised, that the government is refusing to reconsider its misguided and ill-conceived carbon tax, which will be an increased burden to municipalities. This means that municipalities will have to increase taxes on their citizens just to keep up with costs. I have heard from many of the municipalities in my riding, and this has been by far the biggest complaint. Places like Provost, Forestburg, Hanna, Killam, Hardisty, and Wainwright are already suffering and will be in desperate need once this carbon tax comes into force. And I

won't even get into how this government has not done an economic impact study and is, rather, leaving it after the fact for municipalities to deliver.

Furthermore, I am disheartened to see that the government is refusing to address the broken funding model, which so desperately needs updating and attention. Municipalities need a stable, predictable funding model. We need to ensure the success of all Alberta's municipalities. We know that without stable, predictable funding, these municipalities cannot budget properly. For many smaller communities their long-term viability is beginning to come into question.

4:40

To add to that if I may, while I feel that the preamble and the niceties are a good step in the correct direction, inaction from the government is really just a verbal political parade. This government needs to talk less and act more, say less and show more. Stop political grandstanding because great talking points followed by no action is the worst type of hypocrisy.

I'd like to switch focus, if I may, to another very important issue and one that affects nearly every municipality in Alberta, specifically brownfield properties. Section 57 of Bill 21 deals with brownfield property tax incentives. A brownfield is a site that is underutilized and where past activities on the site may have caused environmental soil and groundwater contamination. As a realtor and a broker I've had to work with properties or, as the case may be, not work with brownfields. You see, Madam Chair, I have often had clients come into my office and ask me if I can help them find some vacant land or land that they can redevelop. They'd often come in and say: hey; I noticed there was a piece of land over on the west side of town, and I wondered if that was for sale. I would have to tell them the facts and provide them full disclosure about the property. I had to let the client know about the environmental concerns.

Other times when selling commercial property, I'd ask the seller if they had done an environmental audit as this could hold up the sale and buyers would undoubtedly ask for it. The property owner would then have a phase 1 environmental study completed. This is essentially a historical study. It looks at what has been on the property as far back as the records go. If there was nothing on the environmental, there were no consequences there, then we could move on to listing it, essentially looking at selling the property.

If, however, a phase 1 study does find that there was, for instance, a gas station on that property at one time, then the process moves to phase 2, the testing, delineation, remediation, exposure-control planning phase. Basically, phase 2 is where field tests are conducted to see if there are any actual contaminants present. If none were found, great. We can move on to listing and eventually selling the property. But if contaminants are found to be present, we move to phase 3.

Phase 3 is remediation. This is the let's get this thing cleaned up phase. Phase 3 can take years to complete, and until the remediation is achieved, the land is effectively unusable. Brownfield properties regularly languish in phase 3 for years, often decades or more. I've seen it.

I'm glad that section 57 is being added to the MGA, which will hopefully provide some incentive for brownfields to be developed. Municipalities support the amendments that this government has put forth regarding developing the incentives for brownfield developments, providing them with a capability to be able to allow property tax cancellations, deferrals, or other reductions for multiple years to identify and promote redevelopment of brownfield properties. Municipalities have requested that the government consider exempting brownfield properties from paying education

taxes during the redevelopment process. This would provide even more incentive for brownfield redevelopment and continue on with the good work the government has done here.

While the bill is far from perfect, I feel confident that it at least strikes the right balance and should be supported. For this reason I will be voting in favour of the bill, and I encourage all members from either side of the House to support it as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the main bill now. I'd like to take an opportunity to talk about something that's near to my heart and has been for probably 25 or 30 years, and that is the topics to do with planning. I spoke a little bit about this the other day, and I wanted to get into it a little bit deeper today on the main part of the bill to make sure it was properly covered.

The other day I think I spoke in second reading on a more global perspective of the bill overall, and today I'd like to get into one of the areas that is probably the most controversial aspect of this bill, and that is the confirmation of the amendment to the MGA that will legislate the creation of mandatory growth boards near the city of Calgary.

Just to explain, currently the Capital Region Board, as some of you may know in the House here tonight, is the only mandatory growth management board legislated by the MGA. Now Bill 21 proposes a mandatory growth management board for the greater Calgary urban and surrounding rural region, possibly comprised, although not yet confirmed, of 17 municipalities, which is made up of 14 urbans and three rurals.

Now, despite the fact that the municipalities in the greater Calgary region had already reached a reasonable solution to their future collaborative efforts in the spring of 2014, this new, sudden change in government policy mandating a growth board was actually unexpectedly announced without prior consultation with affected municipalities in September '15 by the former Municipal Affairs minister, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Since that time, although consultation was finally conducted, the most negatively impacted municipalities, being the municipal district of Foothills and Rocky View county, remain staunchly opposed to this legislation we're dealing with now.

While the details, including membership, mandate, and scope, have yet to be addressed, this presents a significant change in how municipalities around Calgary will interact and relate with one another, regardless of whether we have those details or not. In fact, it removes some of the flexibility and autonomy from those municipalities' ability to govern themselves.

As I have said many times – and this goes back for several years – as a former municipal councillor I do understand the importance of regional collaboration and I am a strong believer in regional co-operation. But I do have some serious concerns and questions regarding the growth management boards, including: which municipalities will be members; will any member municipality hold an actual de facto veto; what type of voting structure will be used; will member municipalities be able to abstain from voting; is there a dispute resolution process, and if not, why not; what is the mandate and scope of the growth boards?

Unfortunately, until these questions are answered and the rules around the growth management boards are established by the government, it's really impossible for me to remain anything except really skeptical and very concerned about this proposal. I had hoped – and I said this the other day, and I repeat myself a little bit here,

but I think it's important – that the government's details would have been included in the bill. However, as one of my colleagues has said: so much is left in regulations, so much in the backroom talking between the department and cabinet.

All the stakeholders remain very confused on the change. For such a major policy proposal I would have hoped the government would have embraced transparency and included a little more detail in the legislation itself. When you go through the act – and I have it here on my desk today; it's a pretty thick document – there's lots of detail in other portions of the act, but this one does not include the detail that I'm seeking.

You know, Madam Chair, this type of forced regionalization was problematic in the '80s and '90s. I was there. I lived it. Unless the adverse effects are properly addressed, this form of centralized control will remain problematic. I would like to say that in those days they had regional planning commissions. They had taken a map and drawn a big circle around the major cities and said: those are your areas of control. Local municipalities had a very difficult time in having any kind of proper planning of growth and development during those times because a lot of times when they tried to get something going in the outlying areas, the regional planning commission would vote it down because there was not a fair voting system.

4:50

It was cancelled in '93 – thank goodness – and with the new MGA at the time they decided to have intermunicipal development plans and local municipal development plans, and they were encouraged to talk to each other. I think for the most part it has gone quite well, and we see these two major cities today. Even though I admit that in the last eight years there has been a capital board here in the Edmonton area, the major city of Calgary and surrounding areas have had all kinds of great growth, and there always has been a lot of co-operation between the various municipalities there. Sure; there's been some rough points. But for the most part now Calgary is over a million, almost a million and a half strong. They've been expanding in leaps and bounds, and it seems to have been working reasonably well.

Anyway, this is a situation which I think needs to be explored a little more here tonight. I mean, the situation they're now facing is something that has been called, and should be called, "forced regionalization." It's an unwanted attack on the independence of local municipalities, in my view. You know, the independence of local municipalities is guaranteed in the MGA. Local councils are elected to make decisions in the best interest of the municipality, and any artificial, any imposed governance model that supplants that obligation I think should be opposed and abandoned.

Madam Chair, this is a drastic step that's being attempted here. This is going to be a very big change, and I don't think there's any solid evidence for this to go ahead in this regard. It's difficult to see, really, any legitimate reason for the application of such a forced regionalization plan in the Calgary region by the province as the existence of one or more of the following conditions that I'm going to talk about are not necessarily, readily, or even remotely apparent very often.

There seems to be little evidence of frequent conflict or the potential for conflict among municipalities in that region. Constant reluctance is not there either to participate in regional solutions. As I said before, certainly there are some times that people have differences of opinion. There's little potential for outcomes that aren't going to be beneficial for regional services and regional service delivery, and there's little evidence that there isn't progress towards a solution. There always seems to be. If you're going to resort to such a huge change, you would think that you would expect to see

an awful abundance of conflict, but that is not apparent, I don't believe.

Instead of this type of a forced regionalization tactic, I think it should be known that Wildrose believes in solid, bona fide planning principles involving local autonomy, regional co-operation, and collaboration, as I said before, that I believe in. I think it should be left as a voluntary membership system, not mandated as mandatory.

These principles would include voluntary participation. Municipalities could choose to join or resign from the partnership at their discretion.

I think that it also should be the case where the partners can define their region. Let the participating municipalities determine which municipalities will be part of the regional partnership.

I think there should always be political autonomy. Municipalities should be able to remain independent, and their ability to make decisions in the best interest of their municipality should remain intact.

I think there should be a nonhierarchical governance model. The regional structure should not create another level of government, that this proposes to do.

I think there should be voting equity, where each municipality has one equal vote.

I think that there should be a good consensus of decision-making, where major decisions that require a vote are approached on the basis of reaching a good overall consensus on every decision.

I think that there should be the user-pay cost-sharing model, where for the most part the cost of delivering a regional service is borne in proportion to the use of that service, not to try to help out the major population centre.

I think there should be transparency in the region, that the operation of the governance of the regional entity is essentially easily observable and understood.

I think there should be accountability of individual municipalities. When a municipality chooses to become a member of a regional service partnership, the individual municipality is accountable to its community for the value of that service.

I think there should be the allowance for opting of programs. When a municipality is a member of a regional service partnership and the partnership addresses more than one service, each partner should have the ability to opt out of one or more of the service delivery programs should they choose that to be in the best interest of their municipality and their people.

As one of the larger municipal associations has stated, conflict among neighbouring municipalities is neither new nor is it unusual, and it's naive to expect that simple solutions are available off the shelf to resolve differences. The current MGA already makes provisions for municipalities to address their differences through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms. Historically, municipalities have been able to effectively use these mechanisms to resolve their differences and to put a solution in place.

In contrast, though, forced regionalization in this province has a history, as I've said before, of creating as many problems as it solves. The potential good that results from the application of this approach to regional service delivery has to be balanced against the damage that results from the limiting of the ability of municipalities to satisfy the purpose of that municipality under the MGA.

To conclude, Madam Chair, to some degree here, I think I've tried to make some points where we've had a good discussion on the pros and cons of how forced regionalization could be better replaced by our policy of more local autonomy and a voluntary type of system.

I'd like to point out, too, before I do wrap up, that it should be noted that the AAMD and C, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, has had a lot to say about this particular

subject over the years, and they have sent in some comments to us, when I talked to them here recently. The bottom line is that they, too, understand that there should be local collaboration. They understand that there should be regional co-operation. They agree with that.

They understand, though, that if the government decides that they have to go with this kind of a situation, the decision-making situation or the governance model should be addressed very carefully. They think that in the interests of trying to maintain some sort of fairness in that situation, any decisions should have a couple of criteria, one of them being the support of at least two-thirds of the municipalities for a decision to go ahead and, secondly, that the support of the member municipality whose land would be adversely affected by the proposed amendment is involved in that as well. That was their discussion, and those were their suggestions.

Lastly, I'd like to point out, too, that the AUMA did comment about that. They do support the growth board in general as well, and they do encourage that the alignment of IDPs and MDPs be carefully looked at where deemed appropriate.

At the end of the day, we don't have an amendment to this growth board situation, Madam Chairman, but we would like to strongly suggest that the government look at modifying the growth board model that they may be pursuing to set up in Calgary so that it is not mandatory, it is voluntary. We would also like to recommend that a more fair governance model be pursued than what exists in the capital region.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I had stood just a little while ago, talking specifically about centralized industrial assessment and my concerns and the concerns that were brought to me. I have got a lot of concerns, especially in my riding, specifically about that. But I'm going to move on to something else that, actually, was very alarming to me when I first read it and heard it within the town halls and the literature that the Alberta government had put out, and that's specifically about 5 to 1, the linking of nonresidential to residential tax rates.

5:00

Now, whenever you're hearing about the government putting caps on things, you always need to sit down and say: are we interfering in a place that maybe could cause more damage than helping? The best thing to do is to actually go to the people who are being, I guess, impacted by this. Myself, I went. I do have both the members of AAMD and C as well as the AUMA within my riding, and I got to get a little bit of feedback from them. Now, I do have a municipality within my riding that does have a higher than 5 to 1 ratio, and I was able to hear from them that they're comfortable with the grandfathering clause that has been put through. So I think that the government has found a compromise here that works, maybe not perfectly, with both my rural and urban municipalities.

But I do want to bring up some of the concerns that were brought forward, and maybe the government can have more consideration in this area because, in the end, what this is about is to make sure that we've brought forward all of the ideas, and it could be that an idea that was brought forward to myself may not have actually been brought forward to the government. Or maybe I've got a unique perspective on a particular subject that the government wouldn't have thought about and will reconsider or do an amendment on or, in our case, do an amendment ourselves to this.

I will say that something that surprised me on this specific one was that we have the AAMD and C that have put forward that they are comfortable with the 5 to 1 ratio. They have concerns, but they're comfortable with the ratio. If there was a group that was going to be uncomfortable, it would be the AAMD and C because this group is the one that has all the different tax rates that are involved and the assessment tools that we've got. If they were to bring forward concerns, this is the place that would most likely see it. When I heard the concerns being brought forward by the AAMD and C, they were more specifically about: maybe we need to be looking at a few exclusions.

The thing here is that the AUMA, who also came forward with this, is not supporting the linkage. So the group that I thought probably may look towards supporting it, which was the AUMA, has got a lot of concerns whereas the group that probably will have the greatest impact from all of this would be the AAMD and C, and they're more comfortable with this.

We start looking at both sets of reasoning behind their concerns, and maybe we can flesh some of these things out. The one thing that I see that both groups fully agree with is that maybe what we need to be looking at is that some of the subclasses need to be excluded from these calculations. This is something that the government may want to consider. Brownfields, affordable housing, vacant and nonresidential properties, just to list a few, are the things that they both brought forward saying: we need to address that maybe with the 5 to 1 ratio. Even though it appears that there is some comfort with one of the important groups, there are important things that maybe we need to ensure, that certain areas are reviewed to ensure that this isn't disproportionately hurting any one municipality. So that's the area that both of those groups would agree to.

Now, when we've got the grandfathering clause, in the case of the AAMD and C what we're looking for is a fair balance of making sure that our municipalities can continue running in the same direction that they're going. The question is always that when there's a grandfathering clause – and I'm not advocating for a grandfathering clause, but I am saying that this was a concern that was brought up – possibly this would be something that would be phased out over time. This is an idea that was brought forward, and I think that overall I do understand exactly where they're going with this because in the end we all need to be playing by the same rule book.

But when it comes to these rural municipalities that have incredibly large growth like in Bonnyville-Cold Lake, they have to still continue to be able to adapt to this growth, and this growth is something that we can all say is a big benefit to all of Alberta, not just my local riding. I would say that that same benefit would be up in Fort McMurray as well. There are other parts of the province where there's high growth, where there's exploration, and we need to take that into effect. At some point these ratios can impede the growth of the riding. It is never the intent of any government, I would hope, to impede the growth of a riding. This is an important fact that we need to consider, whether or not grandfathering clauses should be phased out or should be left alone. This is something that was brought up and that I do believe the government should have deep consideration on.

Now, when it comes to the 5 to 1 ratio, exactly how is it that the government came up with this ratio? This is a question that was asked to me in a couple of places. In the end, I'm sure that the government has a wonderful scientific approach to how they came up with the 5 to 1. Possibly they came up with a compromise between both of these large groups. So one of the questions I would like to ask is: exactly how did you come up with the 5 to 1, and where exactly do you see this 5 to 1? Do you see this as something

that is going to stay consistent through time, or is this something that you will be adjusting through time? Now, it is in legislation; it's not through regulation. So it's probably not something that's going to be easily changed. But are we looking for stability here? Is this something that the government will address later on, or are they comfortable at 5 to 1 and just leaving it going forward?

What we've got here is that both groups have put a lot of effort and many stakeholders have put a lot of effort into helping improve the MGA review. It is encouraging that we are hearing and that we saw that the government did some town halls during the summer. I do know that at the town hall that I was at in Lac La Biche, this was also an important part that came up. They may not have come up with how they came up with the 5 to 1 ratio, but the big question was: exactly how will it be implemented? Is this something that the government will be going in and reviewing for the different municipalities to ensure that they are following this? Is this something that the government has got the ratio police, if you will, going out to enforce? Is this something that the government will be watching like a hawk? Because, obviously this is going to be an important piece that could mean thousands if not millions of dollars if a municipality makes a mistake with this 5 to 1 ratio.

5:10

The minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but is there somewhere in the legislation – and I have read it over, and if I missed it, I will apologize. If they go over this 5 to 1 ratio, is the government going to be requesting a return of that money to the property owner? Is this going to be something that's going to be put into trust? How exactly is it that the government is going to deal with a problem? Usually what happens is that these things get identified later on. So how exactly is it that they're going to enforce this if a municipality intentionally or unintentionally breaks this 5 to 1 ratio? Will the government work with them? Let's say, for instance, that it's a smaller municipality that makes this error. They may not have the resources that some of the larger municipalities have so that this could be a true hardship on that smaller municipality. We need to make sure that as we're going through this, we have good, clear answers to these questions.

I think that the government has done a good job with the town halls, again, and I will be voting for Bill 21. My job here is to help make this better. Some of these concerns that I've got, I've heard, and if the answers are there, I would appreciate it if the minister could bring that forward.

In conclusion, when it comes to 5 to 1, I would like to just say that a few more answers around 5 to 1 would be appreciated. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise just to speak about a couple of issues of particular note, of interest, more so to just touch base on the record on a couple of issues that I've heard a lot of people reaching out to me on, a significant amount of public comment around. I'd just like to provide some remarks. With respect to those here at Committee of the Whole, you know, I would never want to presume what's happening in the House, but it's my sense that we're getting down to the short strokes, if you will, of Bill 21, in particular with respect to Committee of the Whole.

I'll just briefly chat a little bit about the issue of the Ombudsman, an issue that has been a topic of public debate. Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, proposes to expand the authority of Alberta's Ombudsman to include municipalities. This

change would allow for members of the public who feel that their municipality has acted inappropriately to write the Alberta Ombudsman asking them to undertake a nonbinding review of their municipality to ensure they practised procedural fairness.

Of course, Madam Chair, you'll know the current process. Individuals only have one real opportunity, and that is the petition process, which can be fairly confrontational and divisive. We also from time to time see a municipality get just about to that level, and the department winds up splitting hairs over whether or not they've reached the threshold, if the individual was a resident or they weren't, and it doesn't necessarily reflect the fact that the municipality may in fact have acted inappropriately.

The Ombudsman, though, comes with a certain amount of benefit and a certain amount of concern. Of course, the benefits include an additional avenue for concerned citizens to seek procedural fairness with their municipality. Another pro, if you will, would be that there is the likelihood that it will create more municipal accountability. The Ombudsman, being focused on procedural fairness – it's not a council decision – provides an independent avenue for review.

Now, there also are a number of concerns, and certainly we've heard concerns from AUMA, AAMD and C in terms of their local autonomy and their ability to address ratepayers' concerns or constituency concerns. It also has the risk of creating another layer of bureaucracy. The current Ombudsman has little or no experience when dealing with local government, so there is a new area that oftentimes a municipality, in fact, may be more experienced in than the Ombudsman. It will quite likely require the expansion of the Ombudsman's office. This, in many respects, is about striking that right balance.

I know that if you connect with some of the larger municipalities, in particular the cities of Calgary and Edmonton or areas where they already have an Ombudsman in place – perhaps the minister could have considered and perhaps they did consider an exemption for larger cities that already have an Ombudsman or a similar role in place, like they do in Calgary or Edmonton. I know that the mayor of Calgary has spoken at length with significant concern about how the provincial Ombudsman may in fact interact with their Ombudsman. Is there a risk that some of these decisions may in fact impact councils' ability to continue to govern or to continue to make a decision in a certain area? There's no doubt that it is a concern for municipalities, particularly the ones that have them.

Additionally, municipalities that don't have an Ombudsman: there is an inherent amount of concern around the loss of local autonomy. But the truth of the matter is that there have been a lot of members of the public that have reached out both to us, the Official Opposition, and, I'm certain, to the minister, expressing a lot of support, feeling that they don't have the same sort of avenues to hold councils accountable as they do in a larger city or in other areas. I know from personal experience, from people contacting my office that have contacted the Ombudsman, that are frustrated and concerned, that they haven't felt like their concern has been heard by someone independent.

5:20

I also think that there is a significant amount of education that could take place that would help people understand the different areas they do have available to them in terms of appeals and certain different types of appeal boards that they could engage prior to needing to go to the Ombudsman anyway. So I think that the Ombudsman is going to have a significant amount of work, and he's going to wind up doing a lot of that education. Certainly, there will be an expansion of that office, or he'll have an inability to actually deal with the influx of constituents who are concerned.

With that said, it is about striking a balance. It appears that the government is not going to provide exemptions for larger municipalities and that they are going to listen to the majority of Albertans who've spoken out in favour of having an Ombudsman and that they are unlikely to provide anything different.

I might just add, though, as we look at some of the other jurisdictions, that British Columbia's office of the Auditor General for Local Government conducts performance audits. The Saskatchewan Ombudsman had its authority extended to municipalities this year as well. Manitoba, in their Ombudsman Act:

- 15 The Ombudsman may, on a written complaint or on his own initiative, investigate
- (b) any decision or recommendation made, including any recommendation made to a council, or any act done or omitted.

So we do see that there are a number of different ombudsmen across the country.

If we look at some of what folks are saying, I'd just like to reiterate that AUMA and AAMD and C do not support the expanded oversight of the Alberta Ombudsman. The city of Edmonton recommends that Bill 21 apply only to municipalities that do not have another form of oversight such as the city auditor, as in the case of Edmonton. The Calgary mayor, Naheed Nenshi, isn't pleased with the government's move to give the Alberta Ombudsman the power to investigate municipalities. But, again, we see organizations like the Canadian Home Builders' Association saying, "We fully support the expansion of the Ombudsman to enforce the MGA," and, of course, other organizations like the Parkland Institute: "The biggest win for accountability, however, is the move to extend the authority of the Alberta Ombudsman to include municipalities."

I just wanted to make sure that we had some concerns voiced of some of those stakeholders and let them know that we were listening to their concerns, that we heard their concerns. It appears that the government is going to pursue this role of the Ombudsman.

I'd just like, as I see the hour, to briefly touch on a couple of quick issues with respect to inclusionary housing, that is also inside this particular piece of legislation. There are a number of pros with respect to inclusionary housing. There are also a number of concerns that have been highlighted around inclusionary housing and ensuring that the cost of the inclusionary housing isn't passed on in such a manner that creates less affordable housing, generally speaking.

Certainly, increased volumes of affordable housing for more Albertans to have safe and affordable access to housing is of critical importance to all. The Alberta government's housing first strategy calls for various levels of nonmarket housing to be provided in all geographic regions and municipalities, not only in the inner city. These are positives for our province. Affordable housing has the opportunity to increase the effectiveness of other social organizations. We all know that having a home is one of the most critical steps in the upward mobility of all, and of course affordable housing is so critically important for our key fundamentals when it comes to people's most basic needs.

The decision, the efforts to have some inclusionary housing, of course, are a positive. It does come with some potential risks. AAMD and C highlighted a few of those when they supported the amendments to improve inclusionary zoning, but they have sought some clarification. I'm certain that the minister is aware of these, but I think it's important that we voice some of their concerns. I know, on behalf of the minister, not that I would speak for her, that the regulations will be posted online for 60 days, where all Albertans, individuals or AAMD and C, will be able to review and

provide feedback on those regulations. She would encourage everyone to do that.

With that said, AAMD and C and AUMA are looking for a definition around affordable housing. These are AUMA's comments.

Developers and the province should contribute towards the offsets [of] the cost of affordable housing . . .

As affordable housing is a provincial responsibility, the costs should not be downloaded on municipalities and should [in fact] be borne by the province and the developers who are earning profits.

It will be important for the regulations to outline how [to require the] offsets for developers [to] be determined so that the possible benefits derived from this tool can better enable the provision of affordable housing in [communities].

The Capital Region Board will advocate for the changes to the provincial legislation.

- Changes to the MGA . . . would give municipalities explicit authority to adopt inclusionary zoning for both Market Affordable Housing and Non-Market [affordable] Housing, including the authority to accept . . . contributions in lieu of housing units.

The Edmonton health trust fund – now, there are areas of concern for some individuals. The Urban Development Institute: inclusionary housing remains a potential area of concern for our industry – depending on the method of implementation, the additional tools and supports that will be acquired to address the provision of affordable housing. The UDI supports the principle of inclusionary and diverse communities. However, the concern is with costs and how those may get allocated to other homes and the lack of practical offsets providing the development.

There's certainly a wide range of opinion on inclusionary housing. I think that's a little unfair, to say "a wide range of opinion on inclusionary housing"; it's more that there are many pros and certainly some cons that I think need to be addressed. I know that in regulations people will be able to provide their feedback.

I'd like to thank members for their attention. I know they've been riveted this afternoon by the amendments and the inspiring comments that have been made by so many on this side of the House, and I look forward to third reading of Bill 21.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

5:30

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

Mr. Kleinstaub: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed, say no. So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading
(continued)

Bill 32
Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016.

Alberta's credit unions are a vital part of the economy, with more than 620,000 members and \$24 billion in assets under management. As stated in the Speech from the Throne earlier this year, our government is committed to making sure Alberta's credit unions "have the business tools necessary for their work and to encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their communities." The proposed changes in this bill will modernize aspects of the legislation, provide additional business powers to credit unions, and clarify membership rules to make it easier for credit unions to lend to small and medium-sized businesses. The amendments before you would improve consumer choice, encourage economic growth, and strengthen governance and accountability to the credit union system.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

On improving consumer choice, this legislation would give credit unions the ability to apply to establish subsidiaries separate from the credit union itself, the building, to act as a broker for all types of insurance. Consumer choice would be expanded for regular Albertans while maintaining a level playing field for existing insurance providers and brokers.

With regard to economic growth, as part of our plan to encourage economic growth and support job creators, we are clarifying membership rules to create more opportunity for small and medium-sized businesses to access loans. Allowing small and medium-sized businesses to become credit union members will increase their access to borrowing opportunities to help grow their businesses.

With regard to governance and accountability, governance and accountability in the credit union system have been enhanced through the introduction of compensation disclosure requirements for the highest paid executives of the largest credit unions to improve accountability to shareholders and stronger governance measures to ensure that the interests of smaller credit unions continue to be represented on the board of Credit Union Central Alberta. Also, increasing transparency, facilitating access to information, and enabling all shareholders to better influence the direction of these entities will enhance the governance and accountability of credit unions and Credit Union Central Alberta.

Finally, some technical changes are being proposed to update provisions and promote the flexibility necessary to keep the framework current. Generally speaking, these changes are consistent with best practices as well as with what other jurisdictions are doing. Some differences will exist because of the differences in the needs of Albertans, Alberta's marketplace, the government's policy goals, risk appetite, and financial capacity.

In closing, credit unions are an important part of Alberta's financial industry and our communities. The proposed bill covers amendments that will modernize and strengthen the credit union legislation to facilitate their ability to continue to be a viable alternative for Albertans well into the future.

I would like to ask all members of this House to support this bill. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to speak on Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016. I'm always excited when I see a bill that will not spend more money come forward from this government. I know that, at the very least, this bill will not put Alberta further into debt. Thumbs up.

While this bill does deal with banks, I'm glad to see that it encourages transparency, strengthens governance, and creates competition for Albertans. It's also nice to see the government keep a promise that they had made in the past. In March in the Speech from the Throne the Lieutenant Governor told Albertans that this government would

work with leaders in Alberta's \$23 billion credit union system to ensure they have the business tools necessary for their work and to encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their communities.

It's good to see that this government has worked with credit unions to craft this bill. The stakeholders that we reached out to were almost unanimously in favour of this bill. In fact, Central, the governing body for credit unions, had this to say about the consultations:

The Alberta government undertook consultation with the Alberta credit union system to determine amendments to the Credit Union Act that would best support credit union competitiveness, Albertans, and Alberta small and medium-sized businesses.

This is a far cry from the infamous Bill 6, where, really, no consultation was done, similar to Bill 25, Bill 203, Bill 207, Bill 22, Bill 27, and Bill 202 from last session. But we are glad this bill was consulted on, so good on you. We're glad that this government is learning, albeit slowly, that to govern the province, they must listen to the people and consult with them.

I would like to talk about some of my favourite parts of the bill, namely the transparency aspect. I'm glad that a sunshine list for the larger banks is being published. Now, I'd like to clarify that statement. Normally I would not be happy that the government is forcing a private organization to publish details, but since Central is happy with the change, then I'm happy as well, as they are directly affected by this bill.

One thing that I'm concerned about, though, is the implementation part of the sunshine list. At the end of the bill, page 11, it says that section 9 does not come into effect until January 1, 2018. Perhaps there is a good reason for this to be put off, but I cannot see why this would be necessary. I would appreciate it if in further speeches or in Committee of the Whole the minister would be able to address why this is included in the bill and, additionally, if he could explain why other parts are not coming into effect right away. That would be helpful, too. We have an understanding as to why the other two will be put off, but we would like to hear from the minister the reasons he has put them there.

Another aspect I'm happy with is the competition aspect of the bill. This bill allows credit unions to sell home and auto insurance in the same manner as other financial institutions. This is great for Albertans. More competition generally means lower prices, better service, and increased access. There are many Albertans, especially rural Albertans, who deal solely with a credit union. They know their bank very well – sometimes the bank manager, their financial adviser, the teller that happens to be their neighbour – in these small rural towns, and they want to deal with their neighbours and their friends because they trust them.

Now, with this legislation small rural towns can get their home and auto insurance from their local credit unions. There are even

towns that do not even have a local insurance broker in the town. That means additional costs for travel for those products. This is going to help with that. This will create, you know, a lot of convenience for many people in these rural parts of Alberta. Unlike Bill 6, that reduced competition for insurance for farms and ranches, this bill increases competition for insurance. Sometimes I don't understand the government. Some days it's more competition, some days less competition. This time it's more competition.

5:40

On one hand, they tell us that the insurance company knows best, being the WCB, and that they will do the best and provide the best and that no one else can give the quality of that insurance. Then almost a year later to the day they extend the insurance sales for home and auto to more retailers, to the credit unions. I really hope that we can get some good quotes from the government side saying that competition is good. It would be entertaining if they said that competition would be bad while putting forward legislation that increases competition.

Now, if I was a betting man, you know, I'd have no clue which way to bet on this one. Which way? Competition is good? Competition is bad? Our caucus strongly supports competition. We are for competition, whether it's for homeowners, vehicle owners, farmers, ranchers, for, frankly, all Albertans. I'm pleased that the government some of the time is for competition, once in a while.

I would like to encourage this government to ensure that as credit unions take on the new role of selling home and auto insurance, they provide the necessary oversight. There are many new rules that credit unions will have to follow, and we do not want Albertans to be hurt by a credit union unintentionally or intentionally not following the rules set out for insurance. We don't want to see any Albertans subjected to tied selling or unethical sales techniques. I see you're in agreement, too. Excellent.

We want to ensure that private information is stored and used in a proper, safe, and ethical manner. I encourage this government to provide as much oversight and assistance as required to ensure that the legislation is implemented in the best manner possible.

Again, I'm glad that this government has put forward a bill that we, hopefully, can all agree upon. I'm glad that this government is in favour of competition. I'm happy that this government is learning how to properly consult with stakeholders, and I hope this trend continues.

I will be voting in favour of this bill in second reading. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Ms McKittrick: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016. I am a proud member of a credit union and have been so for many years. I have seen the power of credit unions supporting communities and economic development in various provinces of Canada, in Europe, and in Asia.

Credit unions are financial co-operatives that provide deposit, chequing, and lending services to their member owners. They are not banks. Owned locally and operated under provincial jurisdiction, they jointly own provincial central organizations. In Alberta it is Credit Union Central Alberta.

Credit unions are part of the co-operative movement, that has a long history. Robert Owen began a consumer co-operative among unemployed weavers in Rochdale, England, in 1844, and co-operative principles of buying and selling were applied to borrowing and lending in an experiment in Germany. The original

credit unions were not only mutual self-help societies but a strong moral and spiritual force in communities.

The first successful credit union in Canada was the *caisse populaire*, started in Lévis, Quebec, in 1900 by Alphonse Desjardins. In the 1930s the organizers of the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia, two Catholic priests, Moses Coady and Jim Tompkins, began study circles to help farmers and fishers to organize credit unions and co-operatives to have greater economic control. They associated themselves with the American Credit Union National Association and established a credit union in Broad Cove in Nova Scotia in 1932. Credit unions grew rapidly in Atlantic Canada during the Great Depression, and by the early 1940s they were being established across English Canada.

I think it's important to understand the history of credit unions and why they have been so important in our communities in terms of economic development and as job providers.

To facilitate the exchange of savings and to help local credit unions become more efficient, credit union leadership in all the English-speaking provinces organized provincial centrals. During the 1950s and 1960s credit unions, which are generally smaller than *caisses populaires*, grew rapidly, largely through using members' savings to provide mortgages and short-term loans. They were able to compete effectively with banks because of low administrative costs, inexpensive premises, and convenient service hours. In the same period they gradually acquired the legal right to offer most of the financial services provided by banks such as chequing.

I just wanted to point out that credit unions are owned by members and are for members. They are very different from the bank system, which is owned by shareholders. In many areas, particularly on the prairies and in B.C., anyone in the geographic area can join, not just members of a specific group or a specific community.

Now the Alberta credit unions. The Alberta credit union system consists of 23 credit unions, with combined assets exceeding \$23 billion, that serve over 625,000 Albertans. Credit unions operate in 208 branches in 129 communities throughout Alberta. One example of a credit union is Vision Credit Union. Over the past 66 years Vision Credit Union has evolved from one branch in Camrose, with assets of \$178, serving 21 members, to 11 branches serving the Battle River region, with over 17,000 members and \$579 million in assets.

Another credit union, Connect First, a Calgary-based credit union, has worked with the government to provide alternatives to payday loans. All the credit unions such as Servus will also be offering alternatives to high-interest loans. Approximately 80 per cent of the Alberta credit union system has committed to offering small-dollar credit products by the end of 2016. Credit unions are real assets in our communities.

Credit unions also employ 3,400 full-time Albertans and contribute significantly to local communities and to the broader provincial economies. There's an average of about \$5 million in donations, gifts in kind, sponsorships, scholarships, and bursaries each year. I'm sure that in each of our ridings we have seen the power of credit unions in helping our communities.

The Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation is a Crown corporation of the government of Alberta and provides strong credential and regulatory oversight of Alberta credit unions. This regulatory oversight in conjunction with nearly \$2 billion in credit union system capital and deposit insurance funds in excess of \$258 million and a hundred per cent guarantee on deposits positions Alberta credit unions as one of the safest financial institutions to do financial business with.

Credit unions are provincially regulated financial co-operatives. This means that every credit union customer is also a member and

owner. Credit union members elect a board of directors from among their membership in a one-member, one-vote system. They are democratically controlled. Unlike banks, credit unions work for their individual members, not corporate investors or institutional shareholders. This is why credit unions are so powerful in our communities. After expenses are paid and reserves set aside, credit unions' surplus earnings are returned to members in the form of profit-sharing. In the last five years alone Alberta's credit unions have returned more than \$34 million in patronage dividends to members.

The Alberta credit union system was very pleased with the Alberta government's throne speech commitment to modernize credit union legislation. It was something they had been asking for for a long time, but it never happened under the former government. In support of modernizing credit union legislation, the Alberta credit union system provided the Alberta government with a comprehensive legislative submission with recommendations to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of credit unions.

I am pleased to be speaking in support of Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016. This act will reinforce credit unions' support of communities and will help to reinforce the credit union advantage. As a credit union member, Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister of Finance for introducing this bill, which will be supporting my local credit union to be better equipped to serve my needs and that of local businesses.

5:50

I would like to read from a letter that was sent to all Members of the Legislative Assembly on November 24 by Credit Union Central Alberta. This is what the letters says, and I'll be tabling it tomorrow.

On behalf of the Alberta credit union system, I would like to take this opportunity to express our industry's support for Bill 32: Credit Union Amendment Act, which was introduced in the Alberta Legislative Assembly [this week].

Alberta Central is the industry association and central liquidity provider for the Alberta credit union system . . .

The Alberta credit union system believes that Bill 32, in its present form, will serve to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Alberta credit unions, which in turn will provide further benefits to Albertans and the provincial economy . . .

Subsequent to this commitment, [made in the throne speech], the Alberta government [entered into] consultation with the Alberta credit union system to determine amendments for the Credit Union Act that would best support credit union competitiveness, Albertans, and Alberta's small and medium-sized businesses.

In response to the Alberta government's credit union system consultation, Alberta Central collaborated with credit unions to develop a comprehensive submission with legislative recommendations for the consideration of the Minister of Finance. This industry submission was submitted to the Alberta government . . . in April, 2016 . . .

A key component of the credit union difference is our strong commitment to ensuring consumer protection rights for Albertans. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that with the legislative changes proposed in Bill 32, ensuring consumer protection will continue to be a fundamental aspect of how credit unions serve Albertans . . .

In closing, the Alberta credit union system would like to express its appreciation to the Alberta government for fulfilling its commitment to enhance credit union legislation. Credit unions are confident that the legislative amendments proposed in Bill 32 will assist credit unions in continuing to effectively serve Albertans and the Alberta communities in which we operate.

In closing, I would like to urge all members of the Assembly to support this bill and especially to be proud of the credit unions that

you have in your communities and to ensure that your credit union can best serve you and the other members through these amendments.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the bill? The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Earlier this year, on March 8, our government revealed an ambitious visionary plan. It was the 2016 Speech from the Throne. Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor said in the speech that

the government of Alberta will do more to promote economic development in Budget 2016 . . . [and our] government will work with leaders in Alberta's \$23 billion credit union system to ensure they have the business tools necessary for their work and to encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their communities. After a careful consultation with the credit union system my government is aiming to modernize and strengthen Alberta's credit union legislation in the fall sitting of the Legislature.

Here we are, Madam Speaker, the fall sitting of the Legislature, and our government, true to our commitment, has introduced Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016.

The bill proposes changes that will affect three main areas of the legislation. First, changes will allow credit unions to broker insurance. The credit unions that pursue this option will apply to establish subsidiaries and act as brokers for all types of insurance. Through this change our government is giving the public more product options while maintaining a level playing field for existing insurance brokers. I think many members of this Legislature would agree that additional customer choice is a good thing.

Second, this bill will allow credit unions to remain strong as they move forward and should encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses. Since being elected, this government has made it a priority to help grow and diversify Alberta's economy. We believe that improving access to financing for small and medium-sized businesses through access to loans and membership in credit unions should help accomplish these goals.

Madam Speaker, the final changes to this bill relate to improving governance, accountability, and transparency. These amendments would require compensation disclosure for the highest paid executives of the largest credit unions. In addition, we are proposing stronger governance measures to ensure that the interests of smaller credit unions continue to be represented on the board of Credit Union Central Alberta, CUCA. There would be a requirement that CUCA include at least two unaffiliated directors. CUCA would also need to implement a dispute resolution process should one credit union obtain a majority representation on the board. Also, with regard to governance general meeting quorum requirements would be updated based on the size of individual credit unions. This is because many credit unions have grown significantly since the legislation was last updated.

Our government believes that these amendments will put stakeholders in a better position to influence the direction of their credit unions while ensuring that smaller credit union interests are still being represented on the board of Credit Union Central Alberta. Madam Speaker, I have no doubt that modernizing this legislation will encourage economic growth, entrepreneurs, and help build a more vibrant Alberta. As Graham Wetter, the president and CEO of Alberta Central, said in a statement:

Bill 32, if passed, will serve to further enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Alberta credit unions, which in turn will

provide further benefits to Albertans, Alberta small and medium-sized businesses, and the provincial economy.

This is why I support this legislation, and I encourage others to do the same.

With that, I wish to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a pleasure doing business with you today, and I move that we adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875