



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 7, 2016

Day 59

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)	Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)	Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)	Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND), Government House Leader
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC), Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)	McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)	McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)	McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W), Official Opposition House Leader	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND), Government Whip	Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W), Official Opposition Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)	Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)	Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)	Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)	Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)	Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)	Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)	Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)	Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)	Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)	Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)	Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)	Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)	Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (ND)	Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W), Leader of the Official Opposition	Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND), Deputy Government Whip
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
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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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
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		Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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

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Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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Hinkley	Pitt
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**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you David James, my assistant deputy minister for electricity and sustainable energy. David is a committed and hard-working member of the public service. With David today is his wife, Alana, and their three children: Kaitlin, Emily, and Tyler. They are using their PD afternoon off from school to attend QP today and learn more about our government. Kaitlin, in fact, is interested in being a teacher and getting into politics one day. I would ask that David and his family please receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, were there any school groups today? The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Edmonton Christian northeast school. Accompanying them today are their teachers, Elaine Junk and Greg Gurnett along with their chaperones, Tibor Hungler, Tanya Mudge, Janet Verlinden, Virginia Esteves, Joy Abesigwa, Marcia Kasapu, and Christina Miketic-Ketsa. If I could ask all of the students to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, when we're having introductions, if you'd avoid the dialogue amongst yourselves, I'd appreciate that.

Are there any other school groups?

The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Salimah Walji-Shivji. Salimah is a practising lawyer with a distinguished career. In 2004 she started practising law with AHS and is currently working with an AgeCare group. Salimah is involved with many boards, nonprofits, and community organizations which provide very essential services in Calgary and across this province. I would request Salimah to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to my colleagues in the House, I'd like to introduce Sheila Aitken and Stephanie Sabadaska. They are my two constituency assistants in Stony Plain. They attempt to keep me organized and the constituency running smoothly in spite of the fact that I keep them running in all directions. I'd like all of my colleagues in the House to help me welcome them with the traditional warm welcome of this House as they stand.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today in the House to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Katherine Spencer. Katherine works as an applied tree physiologist for the government of Alberta and, in her spare time, volunteers and acts as the heritage sports promoter doing wood chopping, logger sports, and dogsledding. She recently made Team Canada for the 2017 dogsledding world championships. Could Katherine please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Dogsledding. Wow.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Gord and Marilyn Elliott. Gord formerly served for six years on the National Council for the Conservative Party of Canada. He's now a member of the Wildrose Executive Committee, and we're so happy to have him. He is joined by his lovely wife, Marilyn, who was also elected to the National Council for the Conservative Party of Canada. Gord and Marilyn are two passionate Albertans who are dedicated to making our province an even better place for future generations. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests today, hon. members? The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my very great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two young people who are supporting me on a recent political adventure I became involved in. I'd like to first introduce Sierra Garner. Sierra was born and raised on an award-winning quarter horse operation near Waterton in southwestern Alberta and is currently living in Lethbridge, working in the tourism sector. She's also vice-president south for the Progressive Conservative Youth of Alberta.

My second guest is Mr. Thomas Ockley, who's familiar to many of us as being a steely-eyed research man for the PC caucus and has recently also joined me in my political adventure. They're both seated in the public gallery, and I'd like all members of the House to join them in the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

#### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are suffering. They're losing their jobs. They're losing their homes. This is a tragedy. But this NDP government doesn't think they share any of the blame. For anyone who doesn't share their enlightened views of the world, they just need a better education, apparently. When they're criticized for their ridiculous, job-killing ideas, they have one excuse: just blame the opposition. They did this during Bill 6. Now, like clockwork, they say that it's the opposition's fault that Albertans are upset about the carbon tax, and they refuse to take any responsibility whatsoever for the damage it's causing.

Mr. Speaker, when I look across the aisle, I see people who don't know the value of a dollar, who don't understand the fears of working families across this province, people who don't know how hard it is to work a real job and make ends meet. For some of these members this is their first job ever. They are completely out of

touch with the consequences of their actions and what life is really about. They make bad decisions after bad decisions, that hurt Albertans. Then they ignore those same Albertans when they go back to their ridings, or, when they ignore frustrated Albertans, well, they jet off to Paris and Morocco. We know this because we constantly hear from Albertans who say: my family can't afford this carbon tax, and my NDP MLA won't talk to me.

The Premier did have something to say this week, however. She wants Albertans to, quote, make better choices. Last time she said: buy a different car. They actually think ordinary people earn the same salaries that they do. Take it from me, someone who's raised kids and owned businesses, life is hard. This carbon tax is going to ruin families in Alberta.

In 2019 Albertans know they will have a better choice, and in just two years the party is over for this NDP government. Then they'll see what real life is all about.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

### Official Opposition and Government Policies

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a person who raised kids and ran businesses, I was disappointed when I opened the paper last week and saw the Leader of the Opposition tell the story of our government and the little red hen. For those who may not remember the tale, the little red hen did all the work: planting the wheat, harvesting it, milling it, and baking the bread. Her friends didn't help with any of the work; they only volunteered to help eat the bread.

Mr. Speaker, I call fowl. In fact, I have my own fowl story to tell. It's the tale of Chicken Little. Chicken Little really liked to go on walks, long, big walks, sometimes all the way across the Legislature Grounds. On these walks Chicken Little occasionally saw things that bothered him.

One day Chicken Little saw the lowest paid workers get a raise. What did he say? "The sky is falling," he declared, and he ran off to tell the press gallery all about it. Then Chicken Little saw farm workers get covered under WCB. "The sky is falling," he insisted to any journalists he could find. Chicken Little saw the government phase out coal and take action on climate change. "The sky is falling," he bellowed to one and to all. Chicken Little saw the government cancel big corporate tax giveaways. "The sky is falling," he recited over and over on Twitter. Chicken Little saw the Prime Minister announce two new pipelines. "The sky is falling," he said, bewildered.

1:40

But, Mr. Speaker, the sky wasn't falling on Chicken Little's head. We know from the story that what fell on Chicken Little's head was little more than an acorn or perhaps a wild rosebud.

Mr. Speaker, in Alberta the sky isn't falling. In Alberta the sky is the limit. We got two new pipelines approved, our jobs plan is working, our infrastructure plan is putting Albertans back to work. Our government is working hard to get results for Albertans, and we will not stop, no matter what Chicken Little says. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, quiet, please.  
Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Economic Development

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the UN's International Civil Aviation Day, near and dear to my heart after a two-decades-long career with Hong Kong based Cathay Pacific airways, the inspiration for my honoured Chinese name Gaoferi, or fly high.

One of the organization's stated goals is to recognize aviation as an engine of global connectivity and a fundamental enabler of global peace and prosperity. Lofty ideals indeed for an industry that started with a rather inauspicious 12-second flight at Kitty Hawk.

I tip my hat to Alberta's aviation pioneers, including high-flying entrepreneur Clive Beddoe, the man behind Alberta's current flagship success story WestJet. Mr. Speaker, to me aviation, trade, commerce, and tourism are the foundation of bridges we build between people and nations that allow us to pursue global aspirations and a chance to share ourselves, who we are, our rich natural resources, beautiful landscapes, hospitable natures, and the expertise and opportunities within our borders with the world in a mutually beneficial, wealth-building manner.

Mr. Speaker, therein lies the opportunity for a better, more prosperous Alberta. But to achieve success and prosperity, we must demonstrate to the world, through these bridges, that in addition to being ethical, sincere, and moral as well as the conscientious stewards of the environment, we are also open for business.

I've learned from places like Hong Kong, as the most free-enterprise economy in the world 22 years running, that we are indeed in control of our destiny. With just over 7 million people, Hong Kong's GDP, with no natural resources to refine or export, is just one-quarter of Canada's GDP while its per capita GDP exceeds ours by approximately \$5,000 U.S. dollars per person. Unemployment is at 3.4 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the PC vision for the future of Alberta is to be the most business-friendly jurisdiction in North America and, dare I say, to take on the likes of Hong Kong for global status in the years ahead. I challenge this government to lay down their misguided, job-killing, investment-repelling policies and do what is right in building this great province.

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

Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce a late guest.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the gallery we have Jamie Leong-Huxley. She has been instrumental in our payday loans legislation. She's worked diligently behind the scenes to help us get community organizations together and really create an initiative that has helped so many Albertans. She has worked tirelessly and been an extremely beneficial partner to the success of our legislation. I would ask that she rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

### Job Opportunities

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I came to Alberta on a Greyhound bus from B.C. What brought me here were the opportunities Alberta offered. The prosperity of this province allowed my employer to take a chance on a new arrival. I found

success here, and now as the MLA for Calgary-Currie I want that success for every one of my constituents.

But right now those same people that gave me a chance are hurting, and it pains me to see that because without their support, I wouldn't be here today. That is why I am so proud of the work this government did to get two pipelines approved. They will boost the economy while allowing us to continue the much-needed work of diversifying our economy and creating new jobs that will come from leading on climate change. These pipelines will help those who helped me.

There are those who say that we should forgo these economic opportunities, leave all the oil in the ground, move instantly to green jobs, and a diversified economy. Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, you can't diversify a ghost town. Conversely, I take offence when I hear those from the Wildrose claiming 140-character, instant budget solutions that would take us backwards, cutting teachers and nurses. When they say things like, "Axe the tax," what they actually mean is to axe the pipelines, axe the jobs. Well, I will not stand for that either.

I want my neighbours in Calgary-Currie to have the same opportunities I did. Male, female, LGBTQ, or disabled: pipelines and a strong economy support whatever field you want to succeed in while we diversify the economy. If my neighbours, working hard to support themselves, should fall, becoming disabled or unemployed, we will be there to help pick them back up because that's what neighbours do, Mr. Speaker.

I am darn proud of my government's record of standing up for jobs, environments, and pipelines. I will happily take my work to the doorsteps of Calgary-Currie. I will put my record of action against the opposition's deep-as-a-tweet plan any day of the week.

People elected me to focus on leading Alberta's economy into this century. Alberta is watching, Mr. Speaker, and I will more than happily show them what I've done.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

#### **Katherine Spencer and Heritage Sports**

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this job I get to meet exceptional people doing exceptional things, which definitely applies to Katherine Spencer. A tree physiologist by trade, Kat volunteers as a heritage sports promoter. Working with cultural and historical groups, she uses modernized versions of historical jobs and activities to teach about our culture and land settlement history. Through exciting and interactive demonstrations and competitions such as the logger sports competition she organizes during Saint-Jean-Baptiste days in Morinville, Kat exhibits sports as history in action.

Two-thousand seventeen is a year of celebration for Canada's 150th birthday, and what could be more evocative of Canada's heritage than dogsledding, well, maybe besides being a lumberjack, or should I say a 'lumberjill'?

Kat Spencer is part of a group of amazing women who have turned the world of professional lumberjack sports upside down. She was on the Canadian women's wood-chopping team and will represent Alberta and Team Canada in the dogsledding world championships in January of 2017, after which she will have competed at the highest level, representing Canada internationally in both sports.

What better place for a world-class log splitter, axe thrower, and dogsledder to be than beautiful and historic Smoky Lake? Kat chose to locate to Smoky Lake because of its heritage, strong sense of community, and wonderful trails, of course. A community-minded

person, she has organized a sled dog race for February 18 to 19, 2017, to share her knowledge and passion with others. The race will provide many opportunities to volunteer and will benefit all that reside in Smoky Lake and the surrounding area. These activities encourage people to get active and learn about an historic transportation method that has contributed to Canadian settlement.

I admire Kat's dedication to reviving heritage sports in our province. What better way to keep the past and our rural roots alive? I hope all members will join me in wishing Kat well in her endeavours and providing our support wherever we can.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### **Health Care in Central Alberta**

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of central Alberta would like to know if they have any place in the centralized planning of Alberta Health Services. Specifically, there are doctors who are concerned with Alberta Health Services' top 20 priorities for Alberta. Not one of the top priorities is for central Alberta. All are focused on Edmonton and Calgary. This is not equality.

Let me list some of the issues in the central Alberta health region. AHS tried to close the Sundre hospital but kept it open only after their MLA and the minister – thank you – intervened. The Didsbury hospital heart rehab centre and lab was closed. Chaplain services across the central region have been reduced. The Red Deer hospital has yet to be approved for a catheterization lab even though the viability has been demonstrated and the need is so great that the local citizens have raised \$10 million for it. Wait times are still getting longer.

With these problems plaguing central Alberta, it's clear that they are not very central in the centralized bureaucracy of AHS. The tax dollars raised in central Alberta for central Alberta citizens are being siphoned off to priorities elsewhere. This is one of the systemic problems with a centralized health care system. The previous government demolished local health care regions, creating one massive, centralized health bureaucracy where everything comes from the top down, the ultimate pyramid, a relic of Egyptian archaeology. The people at the top of the pyramid are so far removed from the problems on the ground that the system no longer reflects citizens' needs. Centralized power and control are for the benefit of big government, not the people.

This centralized system is not working for my constituents and the surrounding regions. We need local decision-making because centralized planning does not include central Alberta.

Thank you.

1:50

**The Speaker:** Table officer, hold the clock, please.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Supplementary Questions**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have had the opportunity to read *Hansard* and would like to clarify a ruling that I gave yesterday concerning a point of order raised by the Government House Leader, the arguments for which can be found on page 2340 of the December 6, 2016, *Hansard*.

The point of order had to do with questions posed by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, which can be found on pages 2333 to 2334 of yesterday's *Hansard*. To be clear, the member's main question had to do with surveys concerning school curriculum while the first supplementary question pertained to persons with developmental

disabilities, and the second supplementary related to a public health matter, namely fentanyl. The Member for Calgary-Elbow's questions were not linked together as they ought to have been. I wish to clarify that the rule of our Assembly is that supplementary questions must relate to the subject matter of the main question.

As Speaker Kowalski ruled on May 12, 2004, a ruling which was quoted yesterday by the government House leader and which can be found on page 1390 of *Hansard* for that day:

Now, there's also a tradition we follow here that if an hon. member is recognized, they raise a first question and then they're allowed two supplementals. It has always been understood that supplementals must have something to do with the first question.

Similarly, on March 30, 1998, Speaker Kowalski ruled that there is a consistent rule that there should be some flow with the questions and they should be in a similar type of subject.

This ruling can be found on page 1200 of *Hansard* for that day.

Accordingly, the Member for Calgary-Elbow's questions were not linked together as they ought to have been.

In the future I would ask and encourage and expect that all hon. members would ensure that supplementary questions are connected to the main question. Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** You just have to listen to how the Premier talks about Albertans to get an idea of what she really thinks of them. It's clear that she thinks that the vast majority of Albertans, who oppose her carbon tax, should be grateful that they just have an opportunity to, quote, make better choices. She calls farmers who oppose Bill 6 the anger machine. She doesn't hesitate to call Alberta the embarrassing cousin. When will the Premier stop showing such contempt for the majority of people in this province, who don't agree with her agenda?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that what our government has been doing has been standing up for Albertans ever since we got elected, and we do that because we value Albertans and we care about their situations. For instance, we did not come into office and move ahead with \$2 billion in cuts to the very services that those families rely on. We didn't do that because we have their backs. We invested in them. We said: we will work with you through this economic downturn. We will not make up pretend solutions while we slash and burn and put nurses and teachers out . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, over two-thirds of Albertans don't support the carbon tax. There are no good choices when families have to pick between heating their homes or driving their kids to school. The only message Premier Notley has for families, businesses, and charities across the province . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you used an individual's name. I think that might have been an oversight on your part.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The only message that this Premier has for families, businesses, and charities across the province who are suffering is to make better choices. Albertans don't like being talked down to. They're upset

with the NDP for bringing in a carbon tax with no mandate, so why doesn't the Premier, for once, respect Albertans by at least giving them a referendum on the carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what we are doing instead is ensuring that 60 per cent of Albertans, every household that makes \$90,000 a year or less, will get a rebate on the carbon tax, so, in fact, we'll be giving even more support to low- and middle-income families than they would have gotten otherwise.

You know what else, Mr. Speaker? Do you know what Albertans are really in favour of? Pipelines. You know what the Prime Minister said last week? It would not have happened without our climate change plan. Would the members opposite like us to go backwards to the point where we do not have those two pipelines approved?

**Mr. Jean:** I know that the carbon tax makes members of the NDP backbench, earning comfortable six-figure salaries, feel important at parties, but it will force Albertans to make better choices between whether to heat their homes or buy groceries. That's the choice they face. Charities will need to make better choices on how to serve those in need. Businesses will have to make better choices on whether or not they keep their doors open and keep Albertans employed. This isn't funny. There are only 24 days until the carbon tax comes into effect. Why aren't you listening to the majority of Albertans, who don't want this carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Well, the member opposite failed to hear the last answer to the question. Sixty per cent of Albertans, which is actually the majority of Albertans as opposed to the group he's talking about, will in fact get a rebate. So the Chicken Little scenario that the member opposite is outlining is not actually accurate, Mr. Speaker. Now, I appreciate that not everybody on this side can look back to, oh, 10 years having received an MP's salary either, but what we do know is that we are standing up for Albertans, and that's why we put the rebate in place, and that's why we are building our economy on behalf of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, on one thing we do agree. This carbon tax will help Albertans put this NDP government in the dustbin of history in 2019. Albertans see what the NDP government is doing to Alberta, and they don't like it. I don't blame them. They see Alberta's energy sector plummeting to 43rd in the world, and the NDP laugh and shrug it off. Hundreds of thousands of people are out of work. This is a big deal. Why doesn't anyone in the NDP seem to get it?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, it is so unbelievable how much the members opposite seem to want to see Alberta fail. They think that if they claim it's happening enough, maybe it will. You know, it is so unfortunate how the opposition is putting politics ahead of doing the right thing. In fact, conservatives at the Prosperity Fund meeting talked about getting the pipelines as a doomsday scenario. That is shameful. I implore the members opposite to stand with this government, stand up for Alberta, and help us promote the pipelines.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, to be clear, I love pipelines, all pipelines going from Alberta in every direction. When people who invest billions into the oil and gas industry think Saskatchewan, B.C., Manitoba, North Dakota, Texas, Oklahoma and don't think Alberta, we have a problem. Are the NDP worried? No. They're happy to cap our emissions and put a crippling carbon tax on our economy while our competitors in the United States laugh at us. This is a



serious issue, especially because you don't get it. Can the Premier please name one tax or one regulation she's put into place that has made Alberta a friendlier place to invest?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we recently announced that the small-business tax is going to be cut by one-third, so there's one. We also announced tax credits for businesses, investment tax credits, so there's two, and there's three. But the big one is that although the member opposite claims he loves pipelines, after 10 years in the federal government: zero pipelines built, and we just got two approved.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Jean:** If the NDP want to talk pipelines, here's a simple question. Just about every one of the Premier's advisers come from the B.C. NDP. They have a long history of working on their campaigns as well. We know that the B.C. NDP are taking the advice of one of her oil sands advisers to fight Kinder Morgan "at the ballot box." Will the Premier mandate that any of her staff or staff of the Alberta government will not help in the election bid of the B.C. NDP? Yes or no?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that every member of this House is going to do what they were elected to do, which is to work on behalf of the people of Alberta. We are going to do that by repositioning our energy economy as the most progressive energy economy in the world, and we are going to do that by being a leader on climate change in North America, and we are going to do that by getting two pipelines built and bringing jobs back to the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

#### 2:00 Agriculture Financial Services Corporation Board

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past summer, based on information from the Auditor General's report regarding the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, this government suspended several senior AFSC executives with pay. Six months have passed, and the government has spent over \$500,000 in wages. To the minister: how does this government justify still paying these substantial salaries, and how much longer must the taxpayer bear the cost of this outrageous boondoggle?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We had the opportunity this past June to dismiss the AFSC's board after examination of some very serious irregularities. That process is continuing on the investigation. These allegations will be investigated thoroughly by the law, by the RCMP, by us to ensure. In the meantime, we have had the opportunity to have an interim board, and I'm very proud of the work they're doing.

**Mr. Strankman:** Mr. Speaker, it's costing the public purse more than \$3,000 a day to pay these people for doing absolutely no work. This is a blatant slap in the face to the thousands of Albertans who have lost their jobs. Minister, how is your agency achieving accountability for taxpayers with these huge salaries paid for no job performance? Or is this simply a way to avoid possible litigation for a wrongful dismissal?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important to note that recruitment is under way for a new board of directors. I'm very proud to say that we had a very large list of knowledgeable, qualified applicants. We are going through that. It takes some time to go through that because we had such a large number. We're close to getting a short list on that. We'll have a new board of directors very shortly.

**Mr. Strankman:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the suspended president's annual salary is over half a million dollars, complete with a government car and a gas card. Another suspended senior staffer makes over a quarter of a million dollars annually. When will this government finally settle this matter of being paid for no work, indicative of how this government will manage other agency, board, or commission executives in the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People right across the province congratulated us on taking action on something that was very serious. We took that action, Mr. Speaker. In the interim we've hired an interim CEO, Ed Knash from ATB, to take that. He's been very competent. This is a human resource matter, and it would be highly inappropriate to discuss it in this House at this time. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I know that many of you will be expecting and wanting gifts under the Christmas tree soon, so you need to be nicer to each other if you're going to get any of those presents.

The leader of the third party.

#### Carbon Levy

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Premier was in B.C. to sell the Kinder Morgan pipeline to her teammates in the B.C. NDP. That went poorly. The Premier told CBC news that the carbon tax "is a tremendous opportunity for [Albertans] to make better choices." Alberta families: all they have to do to see their household finances, crippled by this carbon tax, get better is to "make better choices." Who knew? To the Premier: if your advice to Albertans worried about the impacts of your government's carbon tax is simply to make better choices, is it fair to say that you think Alberta families up till now have been making poor choices?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I have to say it's very encouraging to see that the members opposite are sharing question writers today. That's an interesting choice. That being said, we are very proud of our climate leadership plan. We know that pricing carbon is what experts and economists and business leaders around the world say is what is needed to reduce emissions and to build the economy at the same time, so that's exactly what we're doing. At the same time, we are supporting low- and middle-income families by ensuring that 60 per cent of Alberta families get rebates starting in January, and we will not apologize for that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** The Premier should apologize for her arrogance. It's condescending to respond to the very real anxieties and fears of Albertans by telling them to make better choices. For champagne socialists across the aisle making better choices might be as easy as buying a new car, as the Premier suggested last April, but struggling families can't afford that. To the Premier: your carbon tax rebates will not cover the full cost of a household: electricity, natural gas,

gasoline, food, groceries. When Albertans are told to make better choices, is that a choice between filling up the gas tank and buying groceries? That's what it seems to be.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the members opposite have finally learned that there are lower and middle-income families that actually need their support. It's nice to hear them finally talking about them. That's why our government very intentionally determined that there would be a rebate provided to low and middle-income families so that this would not have a disproportionate effect on them. In fact, the less income families have, the less greenhouse gas emissions and the less carbon pricing they would be subjected to. In fact, they will come out ahead because we are standing up for middle-class families.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, low- and middle-income Alberta families have to make better choices every day by managing their expenses, something that this government has failed to do. Telling them to make better choices is as arrogant and condescending as anything I've heard for years in this Legislature or Alberta. I thought I would give this Premier an opportunity to make better choices, too. Premier, will you direct your Finance minister to make better choices and give Albertans a plan to someday pay back the debt that Alberta families are saddled with?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we are going to do is make the kinds of choices that have the backs of Albertans. We are not going to move ahead with the kind of flat tax that these folks wanted to go ahead with in terms of health care premiums. We are not going to go ahead with laying off nurses. We are not going to go ahead with laying off teachers. We are going to support low-income families. We're going to bring in progressive taxation. We're going to support working families with better child care. We're going to do all those things because we support working families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

#### **Petrochemicals Diversification Program**

**Mr. Piquette:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater were excited to hear the recent announcement of projects approved under the petrochemical diversification program, but they have questions. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what is the expected economic impact of these projects?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Alberta has Canada's highest concentration of petroleum refining, chemical processors, and petrochemical manufacturers. These are the people who add value to our resources right here at home. Yesterday the Energy minister and I were proud to join some of the world's best petrochemical leaders to announce two projects approved under the petrochemical diversification program. The projects represent a total investment of up to \$6 billion that will be invested right here and create more than 4,000 jobs in the construction phase and 1,400 indirect and direct jobs.

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

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our economy has for far too long relied . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Piquette:** . . . on exporting our raw resources and given that Albertans want to see more jobs in the value-added sector, to the same minister: when are the projects expected to begin, and what new products will the facilities enable Albertans to produce?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first project is a joint venture between Pembina Pipeline Corporation and Petrochemical Industries Company, or Pembina PIC. They're going to process about 22,000 barrels per day of propane into polypropylene. The company estimates that the value of what they create is worth 700 per cent more than the propane that they start with. Construction is expected to start in 2019, the facility to be operational by 2021. The second project is Inter Pipeline, which will produce another 22,000 barrels per day and is expected to start next year, in 2017.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Excellent news.

To the same minister: what is the response from community leaders and industry about the government's plan to support the petrochemical sector and to diversify our economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member. This is excellent news. I can tell you that what we're doing on this side of the House is working with Albertans and companies to create jobs here at home as opposed to expending a lot of hot air, which the opposition seems to do a lot of. I'll tell you this much. Mayor Don Iveson said: "This is superb news for the [Edmonton] economy . . . Real value-added petrochem jobs we need." Strathcona county Mayor Roxanne Carr said, "Thank you Ministers . . . for your support in moving [Alberta's] economy forward." Ed Gibbons, who's the chair of AIHA, said that this program will help position Alberta as a competitive location for investment.

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

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

#### **2:10 Child Protective Services Review**

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, when we hear stories of how child and family services has failed innocent children, we are right to seek ways to fix it. To date we have received zero details on concrete measures the Minister of Human Services has taken to stop these tragedies in the future. They say that they want a committee, but they voted against terms of reference to give the committee tools and teeth to help fix the problem. Will the House leader commit that this committee won't be a public relations exercise, and when will we see the rules for this committee?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The death of any child in care is a very tragic situation indeed. This government has done a great deal to try and improve the conditions for children. More needs to be done. The Premier has committed to reaching

across the aisle and working with opposition members in order to find additional solutions to this very difficult problem, and that's what we're going to do.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, we all know the system needs to be and can be fixed, but we also need accountability. That means taking the partisanship out of the committee and giving it the independence to do its work to help give the government concrete advice. Will the NDP commit to working with all opposition parties to form the terms of reference for this committee before the House rises? If not, why not?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my answer to the first question, the Premier has committed that we will be working across the aisle to try and work and find solutions to this very difficult problem. We've done a great deal already, and more clearly needs to be done. We want to reach out to everybody, and in due course we're going to be having conversations about how we're going to be doing that. I think the hon. members just need to stay tuned.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that we have seen dozens of reports, recommendations, and investigations over the past several years into the child intervention system and given that I have personally spoken to foster families that already feel intimidated by this government from speaking out on this very issue, will the NDP commit to giving front-line workers, managers, and foster care providers full whistle-blower protection at this committee, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the questions. Foster parents play an important role in the child intervention system. This year alone I was present at their event here in Edmonton, in Calgary, and in Jasper. So I have been in touch with them, and we are working closely. As far as the front lines, we value the work they do. At the heart of what we do at Human Services is the hard work of the front lines. Even this week I have sent out a survey to hear the feedback from the front lines.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Carbon Levy and Seniors

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some Albertans will have hangovers while others may need a stiff drink as they wake up to an Alberta NDP carbon tax on New Year's Day, but all will be subject to higher costs and additional financial burden in this sobering attack on the lives of Albertans. Nonprofit seniors' care providers share significant concerns due to the impact of the carbon tax and their ability to deliver the levels of care, nutrition, and comfort rightly expected by Alberta seniors. To the minister of seniors: how will you respond to these deserving seniors and their compassionate care providers, and what choices would you like them to make when their lives and budgets are negatively impacted by the burden of your misguided carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Environment and Parks minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. You know, we heard from the nonprofit and voluntary sector. They told us that they want to be part of the

transition to a lower carbon future. We're working with them to get there. We convened a nonprofit and voluntary sector working group to hear from them, brainstorm the efficiency programs that will help defray many of these costs and ensure that it keeps money in folks' pockets and make sure that we've got the right investments in efficiency. We'll have more to say about that in early 2017.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Their clock is ticking while yours isn't.

Given that the government also owns and/or operates seniors' affordable housing across the province and given that these facilities will also face difficult choices around the burden of the carbon tax and that a portion of current funding will automatically be redirected away from seniors' care towards paying this mandatory tax, without rebate or compensation, again to the minister: what are your department's estimates for the total cost of the carbon tax for government-owned or -operated seniors' housing in fiscal 2017? Can you share those details with us?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's very important for us to ensure that seniors are well housed in Alberta, and we're completely committed to that. Our government has put \$1.2 billion in our capital plan over five years. We know that climate change is real, and we want to make sure that we have a healthy economy and healthy citizens. We've increased the operating budget by 2 per cent, and we are working with those housing management providers to support seniors. We are very pleased with the work that we've done. The opposition would be cutting billions of dollars from the budget instead of investing, and that's what we're doing. We're working with people right now.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There goes the salad off their plates and the foot care that they probably need as well.

Given that the government touts its bare-bones rebate program as a cure-all for the ills of the carbon tax and given that many seniors who still live in their homes actually exceed the income thresholds because of effective retirement planning combined with additional benefits such as modest pensions, again to the minister: what is your government doing to assist these seniors, who have serious concerns about the impact of the carbon tax, and what better choices do you expect them to make to protect this modest retirement lifestyle that they have worked so hard for their entire lives?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, 60 per cent of Albertans will receive a full rebate; 66 per cent of Albertans will receive a full or partial rebate. That's two-thirds of the population. In addition to that, there will be \$645 million worth of investments in energy efficiency programs to make it easier for folks to make their homes more comfortable and to reduce their bills even more than the \$30 per tonne. Now, in addition to that, there will also be \$2.2 billion worth of investment in green infrastructure, and in many cases that will be for some of our . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Education Review

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Education minister has appointed members to a secret expert working group that will spearhead the rewrite of the entire kindergarten to grade 12 curricula. The minister has in the past stated that he will not proclaim the Education Act until he is sure that it reflects NDP values, and this NDP government has a long history of appointing individuals to panels with backgrounds in NDP ideological activism. Why will the minister not release the names of the committee to the public and assure Albertans that the working group is not just another NDP think tank?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Education minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. The expert working groups that we have working on the curriculum – which is the most ambitious curriculum rewrite/reform in the history of this province. There are more than 300 individuals from the Alberta Teachers' Association, from the Department of Education, from universities, from different other groups, and the only reason that – certainly, we have issues around sensitivity around these individuals. They can choose to put their names forward, you know. Making attacks on people that are making choices to help us to build a curriculum is entirely inappropriate.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Smith:** Well, I guess those details will remain secret for now. Given that this minister has named the Alberta Teachers' Association as a primary partner in the curriculum rewrite and since the ATA has loudly and consistently been opposed to funding for anything but one monolithic school system, can the minister ensure that parental choice in education will be protected when he's partnering with a group so opposed to funding diversity in our education system?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, may I remind you again about asking questions. The last couple of speakers have given preambles in the supplementals.

The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are working with the widest diversity of groups to build new curriculum and to strengthen all forms of education. So for people to suggest that somehow we are limiting choice around education is simply misleading. We are working very hard with a wide range of people to strengthen the curriculum, as evidenced by the excellent math progress we made yesterday in terms of building curriculum.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given this massive curriculum rewrite is going to be one of the most ambitious undertakings in Education history and since this government claims to support the rights of parents to make decisions with respect to the education of their children, will parents and parent organizations be participating in the expert working groups, or will the NDP activists be deciding the outcome of the curriculum rewrite?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, for this member to somehow suggest that our expert working groups or the many thousands of people who are contributing to building curriculum are somehow activists is not only demeaning to the professionalism

of the work that they do but also to the general outcomes that we want to see for our children. I invite everyone. We had 32,000 people participate in the last survey, the largest, and we will have many more of those groups. We have public meetings. It's the most transparent exercise ever conducted in Education history in this province.

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

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Nonprofit Social Service Providers

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer I met with various stakeholders in a wide range of different not-for-profit service sectors, and what I heard loud and clear is that there appear to be major issues with the new government granting and funding models. According to the stakeholders they are worried that the minister has implemented a system which will pit social service agencies against each other when it comes to funding, in a perpetual race to the bottom. Is the minister implementing a contract bidding process meant to undercut long-standing funding agreements for not-for-profit agencies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that Albertans have been receiving services for many years from nonprofits, and as we move forward, they will continue to receive those services. That's not the case. We are not putting services up for bidding. Period.

**Mrs. Pitt:** That's not what we hear, Mr. Speaker.

Given that these not-for-profits in some cases have been operating for many decades and given that we are talking about the services that provide support to front-line staff and individuals with developmental disabilities and given that this new model allows for for-profit service providers to bid for funding from out of province and country, what is the minister doing to keep the community aspect in community-run social programs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our priority is to make sure that Albertans with disabilities continue to receive the support they need. That's why we have provided stable funding and we have increased that funding. As I stated earlier, there will be no bidding for any front-line services. Whoever they were receiving services from, they will continue to receive those services, and they will have the choice to select the service provider they want to receive services from.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that this new process forces individual community services agencies to apply through the Human Services online contracting system and given that these agencies, who are already stretched pretty thin, report that these applications are taking enormous resources to complete, how do you expect small local community agencies to be able to complete these onerous applications and compete with the larger for-profit companies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our priority is that Albertans with disabilities should have a choice and should be able to get the services from a wide range of service providers. These cases are complex. These service providers are unique, and we are supporting Albertans. Whoever they choose to get services from, we are

providing the supports. That's why we have maintained stable funding. The information that you are spreading is simply misleading and incorrect.

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

### Police Street Checks

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago I urged the Justice minister to halt the unlawful practice of carding, or street checks, which sees police randomly stop citizens and ask for their ID. When police randomly card citizens without reasonable suspicion that they have committed an offence, they are breaching section 9 of the Charter, and it's really that simple. The minister has said that she's working with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to establish guidelines, and I was certainly pleased to hear that. To the Justice minister: when do you expect to have guidelines in place, and what will be your advice to law enforcement in the interim?

Thank you.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. All Albertans deserve to feel safe and respected in their communities. That's why we'll continue to work with the police services to ensure that they can do their job while fulfilling their commitment to bias-free policing. I have found police services to be very open to having these discussions and ensuring that these techniques are only used in places where they're appropriate and they're not used in a biased way. In terms of section 9 of the Charter I don't think it's really appropriate to be pronouncing on individual cases here in this House.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you also told the House that you want to ensure all people in Alberta feel respected and given that you also indicated that you want to ensure everyone can be onboard with guidelines that provide parameters for police when asking citizens for their ID and given that members of communities who feel carding is a form of racial profiling would like to be part of any form of consultation, again to the minister: how and when will you consult with these stakeholders?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We've been working very hard. We've heard some concerns rolling in from community groups already, and we've been having those discussions with them, but we will continue to go out and have those discussions. We will be having a more formal consultation around specifically, you know, when these practices – you're talking about a range of behaviours – are appropriate and when they're not appropriate and what's appropriate to do and what isn't appropriate to do. We will continue to have those conversations.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that Ontario has developed strict regulations for carding that come into effect on January 1 and given that these regulations require officers to provide a reason for stopping citizens, to let the person know that they do not have to answer the questions or provide ID, and to provide citizens with a way to follow up after the fact, to the same minister.

Very simply, this is one of many choices. What do you think of Ontario's solution to this issue?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, we think it's important to have a made-in-Alberta solution, and that's why we're working with community groups here in Alberta and we're working with the chiefs of police here in Alberta to ensure that we have a model that works for us here. Certainly, it's the case that we have some different policing concerns here in Alberta than they do in Ontario, so it's important that we have a made-in-Alberta solution to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our communities and our police here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Affordable Housing in Red Deer

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year the city of Red Deer proposed a locally developed delivery model to provide affordable housing and other support services for clients. I know that this delivery model was developed in consultation with local agencies and stakeholders such as Safe Harbour Society, Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter, and Youth & Volunteer Centre. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how is the government supporting this initiative?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for her strong commitment to affordable housing. This summer I had the pleasure of visiting Piper Creek Lodge with her, which was built in 1956 and was one of Alberta's very first lodges, and it's still operational. I support this initiative in principle because it has the potential to deliver better outcomes for people who need these supports. I understand that the groups involved have held an initial working session and are planning to do further work. I look forward to seeing the results that come from these sessions.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that clients and taxpayers expect best practices for housing and service delivery models, if this initiative is successful, is it an approach the government would support in other regions of the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although I don't want to speculate, I'm very interested in the developments in Red Deer and how they can benefit clients. I believe that these initiatives need to be driven at the local level. Local housing and support services providers are in the best position to decide what works in their individual communities like facilities in Sundre, Crowsnest Pass, and other places across the province. My ministry will continue to provide advice, support, or information as required to help with these initiatives.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the need for new affordable housing, the need to fix units that are in disrepair, and the need for elder abuse suites in my constituency, to the same

minister: what specifically is the government doing to address these needs?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve a safe and affordable place to call home. Just like many other municipalities in the province, Red Deer has a substantial number of families on wait-lists, and many buildings are showing their age. That's why our government is taking action and investing \$1.2 billion over five years across the province. We'll continue to work with the local housing management bodies and examine their business plans to see what projects we can support.

We also are committed to addressing the issue of elder abuse. That's why we invested \$1.2 million in grants to establish community response models, bringing in law enforcement and financial institutions, to eliminate elder abuse.

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

### Carbon Levy and Agriculture Costs

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, in 24 days the carbon tax starts. In my riding there are all kinds of agribusinesses that use electricity or natural gas for secondary processing. A well-known greenhouse in my riding is estimating that the carbon tax will cost them \$1.5 million in '17 and \$2 million in '18. Another agribusiness owner told me that his expenses for natural gas will increase \$700,000 to \$800,000 next year. To the minister: has your government considered what the economic impact of this tax will be on agrifood and agribusiness in this province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have been listening to the agricultural sector right along. We had the opportunity to meet with producers and processors from one end of the province to the other. We've been hearing them. We heard them to the point where we have had the opportunity to have an exclusion on marked fuel.

We've also listened to the member who brought up greenhouses in particular. I want to have an energy efficiency program. The Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association wishes to extend thanks on behalf of the sector to the government of Alberta for expansion of existing on-farm energy programs. The greenhouse operators, like all other farmers and producers in this province, know what we're doing.

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

**Mr. Schneider:** Given that the carbon tax raises production costs in agribusiness and given that a lot of Alberta companies are price takers and can't pass on additional costs to the consumers, whether they're selling the products to struggling restaurants or having to compete at a farmers' market with sellers from somewhere else that don't have a carbon tax, to the minister. Agribusiness stakeholders are telling me something completely different than what we're being told in this House. Are you willing to table specific details on your outreach to these businesses and what these stakeholders are telling you? I know that they've talked to you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I know that farmers have been stewards of this land for

generations. They continue to be so. I know that farmers also believe in the science of climate change. They're looking for opportunities to lower their greenhouse gas emissions, and there are economic benefits of doing so as well. I'm continuing to work with farmers and ranchers and processors and producers right across this province as we go to a carbon-neutral environment.

**Mr. Schneider:** Given that this government claims to be fostering a diversified economy and given that I'm hearing the news of greenhouses shutting down south of Calgary and given that one greenhouse owner pointed out to me that the NDP say that they want locally grown food but in reality are making it very hard to operate in Alberta, to the minister. My constituents are watching right now. Will you stand and tell us what this government is doing to ensure that companies in agrifood and agribusiness can operate successfully in Alberta and compete with their counterparts in other jurisdictions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I can highlight what we have been doing. I've already mentioned the exclusion of farms on the carbon levy. We have an expansion of \$10 million in the efficiency grants for farms. Alberta Pork: "The efficiency programs in Alberta have been very valuable to pork producers." The Alberta Chicken Producers: "We appreciate this increased investment and shift in the government's cost-shared portion of these programs." The Irrigation Council: by extending the cap under irrigation programs, we are able to do more, make our operations more efficient.

Mr. Speaker, farmers right across this province recognize climate change and are willing to . . .

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

### Government Agencies, Boards, and Commissions

**Mr. Rodney:** Mr. Speaker, before the last election the Balancing Pool was working just fine, thank you very much, with all five members on board. I've been asking why this government did not make a better choice when they did not report that since then they've dropped to three and then, alarmingly, to just one member. We still have no answers to this critical question.

So let's try the WCB. Recently they had no less than six vacancies on their board. Is this government even committed to them? To the Minister of Labour: why have you not announced newly appointed members for these vacancies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government remains committed to working with all our agencies, boards, and commissions to make sure that we're appointing appropriate individuals and working with them. We have just gone through a process of posting the positions on the new ABC board appointment website. We are working with the WCB to make sure that they get the appointments they need and doing so in a way that makes sure we involve all Albertans to get the best representatives possible.

Thank you.

**Mr. Rodney:** But you're still six members short.

Given that a recent *Calgary Herald* article is entitled There Is a Governance Crisis in Alberta, partially because the U of C, ACAD, MacEwan U, and the U of L, just to name a few, were still awaiting the appointment of board chairs and given that diversity on ABCs

along with corporate knowledge and skill sets are something that we can all agree on and given that there's a huge amount of work to do to fill board vacancies and ensure that ABCs can function as efficiently as possible, to the Premier: what better choices are you instructing your ministers to make regarding the escalating problem of ever-increasing numbers of ABC vacancies in this province?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are happy to let the sunshine in and Albertans of any background, experience, and expertise put their names forward so that they can have an opportunity to serve this province. We're not going to repeat what happened for decades, where friends and insiders only had the track to have opportunities for leadership. Everyone is welcome. We are opening up the application process, and we're pleased to move forward in appointing a variety of Albertans to serve this province.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that in this same article there are significant questions regarding government interference with the structure of the board of the Alberta Energy Regulator and given that there is also grave concern outlined that the government may interfere with the structure of the Alberta Securities Commission as well as AIMCo, again to the Premier: what so-called better choices will you be making to the board structure and makeup of ASC and AIMCo prior to 2019?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question. You know, we are currently involved – last week I was at a supper for AIMCo, and two new board members, very talented and excellent people, came on to join that board. We have a process where some time out, and we're consistently finding people to put on those boards. We are working so that this is not just an insiders', old boys' club, like happened in the past over there. We're looking for talented Albertans and other people and bringing them on. We'll do that because that's the best for Alberta. You didn't do it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.  
The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Climate Change and Agriculture

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is leading with a plan to address climate change. Climate change adversely impacts our health, our environment, and our economy. Rural Alberta is particularly vulnerable on the front lines, including the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, where we have seen two forest fires in the last seven years. To the minister of agriculture: what are the numbers actually showing of what these impacts are?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, as stewards of the land our province's producers know first-hand the impacts of climate change. Over the last hundred years or so producers and their families have seen an average of a two-degree Celsius increase to surface air temperatures across the province. They've also seen that first frost has come much later. They've also seen changes to precipitation across the province, with increases in some regions, decreases in others. Of course, these changes affect agriculture production. We see increased occurrences of extreme weather, increased threats from pests due to milder winters, and changes to crops that tolerate these occurrences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Given that producers will need to consider new or adapted crops to address these changes because of increased pest persistence and infestations due to milder winters, to the same minister: what is the government doing to prepare Alberta's agriculture industry for the realities of climate change?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, we will help producers adapt to climate change by continuing to invest in research and technology. The province has two crop diversification centres, one in the north, another in the south, to provide applied research, special crops, crop varieties and to diversify production. Similarly, on the livestock side we support investments in projects that support research, innovation, market development and that improve competitiveness. We've also invested in the Farm Stewardship Centre in Lethbridge to use applied research to improve whole farm sustainable practices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that farmers and ranchers are the stewards of the land and see first-hand the impacts of a changing climate and given that these producers want to invest in energy-efficient options for their operations, what is the actual uptake of this government's on-farm efficiency programs, that were rolled out for the agricultural community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. We recently announced a \$10 million expansion to energy efficiency and renewable energy programs for producers. I'm happy to report that these programs have been very well subscribed. We've approved projects that produced 350 kilowatts of solar energy, and there are applications for another 586 kilowatts received by the department. Applications for the on-farm energy programs are through the roof. Usually we get 15 applications a month; we got 250 applications in November alone. The numbers don't lie. There's a great appetite for programs that help producers become more efficient and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. I look forward to our continued . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Student Assessment

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By this minister's own admission the 2015 PISA results are a valuable snapshot of how our students are performing relative to the rest of Canada and the world. He said that it provides some valuable information for both schools and the ministry and Albertans to see how we're performing in these subject areas. Yet the value of the provincial achievement tests, which also provide a snapshot of student learning, is being undermined by this government. Will the minister please explain why he will not end the failed student learning assessment experiment and reinstate the grade 3 PATs?

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are certainly working hard. We're very proud of our international results. In reading and in science Alberta was the very number two on the entire planet Earth. We certainly are working hard on PATs. I instituted the no-calculator portion for grade 6, and yesterday I instituted a no-calculator portion for grade 9 mathematics, so we are strengthening those exams as well in consultation . . .

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

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, given that this minister has undertaken a, quote, collaborative system-level discussion regarding standardized testing and given that the ATA recently passed a resolution stating, “Until such time as the ministerial review of international benchmarking tests is completed, we urge our members to protest to the minister their forced participation in these international benchmarking activities,” can the minister assure Albertans that this review of the international assessments will include Albertans who are supportive of standardized testing and that he will not simply bow to ATA pressure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this gives us a great opportunity to look at some of the programs that we’re doing to strengthen education generally and mathematics specifically in light of the use of some of the assessment tools we have available to us. Yes, we continue to use those assessment tools because, yes, they give us an opportunity to see where we’re at at any given time. I think that it’s important for us to always work together on curriculum and assessment, work with our teachers, with parents, and so forth. Look at the wonderful results we have accomplished together.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the president of the ATA is quoted as saying that cancelling PATs “would be good for students and for teachers” and that “it’s well past time to kill this zombie” and given that the ATA is a full partner in the curriculum rewrite and given that we are hearing from many Albertans that they want the PATs because of the information they receive about their own child’s learning, can the minister assure Albertans that he will not end provincial achievement tests?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I made it pretty clear that we are in fact working together, with different assessment models. We use PATs in grade 6 and grade 9. I recently just strengthened both of those exams in mathematics to include no-calculator sections. I’ve strengthened the program of studies to work on basic math skills as well. We are working with these tools along with teachers and so forth and will remind the hon. member that, of course, we make the decisions here in the Legislature. We are carrying on with these exams along with other programs that we use. He can read the newspaper all he wants to find . . .

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

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the tale of Chicken Little, which I referred to in my member statement earlier today. It’s a story I’ve used to teach my children that words have power and consequences. I encourage the members of the opposition to read it.

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

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I’m tabling the requisite copies of the interim report of the Senate Committee on Transport and Communications titled Pipelines for Oil: Protecting Our Economy,

Respecting Our Environment. I had the opportunity to appear and testify before this committee of senators who ordered this report.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As promised, I’m tabling five copies of the *Calgary Herald* article dated November 8, 2016: There Is a Governance Crisis in Alberta. You’re going to want to read this one.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a newspaper article from the *Financial Post* dated Wednesday, December 7, that I anticipate referring to in my point of order. The title is Beware of Fake News Reporting That Liberals Are Better than Tories on Pipelines.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe there were two points of order today. In fact, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre’s was one of the first ones.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to the point of order that my younger, smaller brother rose on during question period today – the reference for your sake and for those in the House will be Standing Order 23, imputes false motives to another member – when the Premier made a statement that was untrue. The Premier said of the Leader of the Official Opposition that during his time in Ottawa representing the good people of northern Alberta very admirably, there were zero pipelines approved. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, there were three or four major pipelines approved, including twice as much capacity as was recently announced this week.

Now, make no mistake, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased with the 600,000 barrels of oil that are now going to be able to be transmitted through pipelines or the expansion of pipelines that the government recently announced. I am very pleased by that. But to say that the Leader of the Official Opposition was in Ottawa during a time when zero pipelines were approved is absolutely not true and is an allegation that is likely to create disorder in this House, as it did today. I simply ask the member to withdraw the comments and apologize, and we can move on with what can be a very productive day.

2:50

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

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is very obviously a matter of debate and, therefore, not a point of order. The challenges facing our energy sector getting market access – I myself am contemplating a pipeline from my house to my garage. We’re not going to take credit for a third pipeline getting built. There are pipelines being built all the time. The matter here is that the only way . . . [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

. . . the only way to do that is to get Canadian pipelines to Canadian tidewater. In that respect, the opposition parties failed



over the past decade despite being in government both here in Alberta and in Ottawa. In doing so, they failed workers by denying them jobs, they failed families by denying them larger royalty revenue, and they failed every Albertan with lost economic opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other members?

Hon. members, I'm not sure that this is anything more than a disagreement about the facts in terms of the types of pipelines that are being discussed. In this particular situation I would rule that there is no point of order.

However, let me remind you yet again that we should be cautious about the remarks that are passed across this very famous aisle in the middle.

The second point of order, I believe, was raised by the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Point of Order

#### Oral Questions

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, first, while I'm on my feet, to your earlier ruling about my question yesterday, I will just accept your ruling, apologize to you and to the House for my error in my line of questioning, and I will be more careful in the future.

But I will keep at this. My point of order is under *Beauchesne's* section 408(1)(a) and (b), when speaking about questions.

Such questions should:

- (a) be asked only in respect of matters of sufficient urgency and importance as to require an immediate answer.
- (b) not inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are correct.

The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, again, asked a question specifically about the petrochemical diversification program. Remarkably, Mr. Speaker, on December 5, which is scarcely two days ago, there was a government news release entitled *Petrochemical Plants Will Diversify Economy, Create Jobs*.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker – and I mean this in the truest sense – we don't have the Blues, because I was hoping to be able to quote directly from the answer provided by the minister. I recall words to the effect of:

projects that would . . . process propane extracted from natural gas resources into value-added plastics products that people all over the world use every day. The projects have been approved [and] receive royalty credits under Alberta's Petrochemicals Diversification Program, which was announced and began receiving applications in February 2016.

That's a direct quote from the government news release, Mr. Speaker, and words almost exactly to that effect were spoken by the minister for economic development. The news release also says:

The first project is a joint venture between Pembina Pipeline Corporation and Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), which has been approved to receive . . . royalty credits.

Et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, again, those are words that were spoken almost exactly verbatim by the minister of economic development in this House. That information is readily available in a government news release, as is information about the amount of product processed by the facility, as is information about data, about investments that would be made over the course of the life of the project.

I just want to quote a ruling made by Speaker Zwozdesky, which I hope will illuminate some of this. I also just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that my purpose for bringing this point of order up now for a second time this week is not simply to slow down the

proceedings of the House, not simply to get my words on *Hansard*. I believe there's a very important principle here that has been established through history in Legislative Assemblies. There are tools available to private members of this House, tools available on the opposition side, and there are greater tools available to government private members to seek answers from their own ministers, from the front bench, in response to constituent questions.

The opposition side, Mr. Speaker, has rare and limited opportunity to hold the government to account. The purpose of question period as laid out through the decades in *Beauchesne's*, in parliamentary practice, and in our own standing orders is for the opposition to be allowed to use that time. When the government side uses that time frivolously, which I believe has been done here a couple of times this week, it reduces the ability of the opposition and all private members, frankly, to hold the government to account.

In other jurisdictions, Saskatchewan most notably, there are no government backbench questions allowed during question period. None. Now, question period is shorter. That may be something we want to consider in this Assembly. It's an issue for another day and another committee.

The principle that I'm arguing here, Mr. Speaker, I think, is a very important one. I do now want to quote Speaker Zwozdesky as the then Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock asked a question. In response, before the minister answered her question, Speaker Zwozdesky on December 6, 2012, *Alberta Hansard* page 1344, said:

Hon. members, as you all know, the purpose of question period is to seek information and to hold the government to account, so let's see how you do with your supplemental.

The government answered, and in response, then, to her supplemental, before the government minister answered the question and following the first supplemental, Speaker Zwozdesky said:

Hon. member, really? Frankly, I've never heard that sort of question before, but given that it's been asked by a new member, I will allow it this one time.

Now, historically, December 2012 was the fall sitting immediately following a provincial election, and members were brand new, so the Speaker allowed that very government-friendly question, let's say, one time. A point of order was raised, and in *Alberta Hansard*, page 1352, also on December 6, 2012, Speaker Zwozdesky said:

In this particular case I could have and should have at the time reminded Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock that questions in question period not only ought to seek information and hold the government to account, but they must also not be hypothetical, and they must not seek opinion. On that point, I would uphold where you were coming from, hon. member.

That was in response to the member who raised the point of order.

With that, I will return to my seat, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to your ruling on this matter. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** You used the word "principle," that the practice, in your interpretation, has been that the private members on the government side have a better advantage than opposition members. Is that the point you were trying to make?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there are . . .

**The Speaker:** I don't need any other. I just wanted to make sure that was the point.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it very disappointing to see this member yet again belittling the very real issues and

concerns raised during question period by any member of this Assembly.

On page 501 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, it states as follows:

There exists a vast body of traditional guidelines, many of which are no longer valid or have fallen into disuse. Because of the difficulty in distinguishing between valid and outdated precedents, Speaker Bosley addressed this question in 1986, stating that the appropriate rules for Question Period should recognize the following principles . . .

- While there may be other purposes and ambitions involved in Question Period, its primary purpose must be the seeking of information from the government and calling the government to account for its actions.

Mr. Speaker, what we had today in question period was the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater asking the Minister of Economic Development and Trade about a project that has a direct impact to his constituency. The member sought information, including information about when projects are expected to begin, just as the citation that I read says can be done during Oral Question Period.

Just two days ago, on December 5, 2016, on page 2281 of *Hansard*, the member raised a very similar point of order. You yourself ruled that they did not have a valid point of order. In an excerpt from that *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, you say, "I know that the government backbenchers will reframe their questions so they have much more substance to them." We have done just that.

3:00

Not only is this similarly not a point of order, but I think the member opposite should refrain from raising repeated points of order that have previously been ruled on, and the member opposite raising this should be more considerate of the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly. Those rights and privileges extend to our members on the backbench here, Mr. Speaker, and I do find it offensive that he would suggest that our members for some reason cannot ask questions. I am proud of all our members on this side of the House, and I encourage them to continue asking their questions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'd like to defer a decision on this one till tomorrow. I'd like to read some of the points being made.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

#### Bill 35 Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As we're just moving into Committee of the Whole, I just wanted to start off with some introductory comments about the bill, and then I'm looking forward to discussing the details with my colleagues and looking at any amendments that might be suggested. If passed, this bill will ensure that political parties are focused on earning the support of all Albertans, not just a select wealthy few. It will also bring Alberta's

election financing laws in line with the rest of Canada. The bill is aimed at making changes to three major areas: specifically, contribution limits, spending limits, and third-party advertising.

To speak briefly about each of those, the amendments around contribution limits are going to ensure that no individual can donate more than \$4,000 per calendar year. The contribution limit involves money going to any combination of political entities, be they candidates, constituency associations, political parties, leadership candidates, or nomination candidates. Let me clarify that this contribution limit would not be retroactive or apply to any ongoing leadership contests. With this exception, in the bill, if passed, the contribution limits would be effective as of November 28, the day the bill was introduced. This contribution limit will help prevent contributors from attempting to buy influence at the last minute by not having that introduction date or that change date be January 1.

This limit is very reasonable and is in line with other jurisdictions in Canada to ensure that no single individual has significant influence over a political party, candidate, or contestant. The aggregate limit that we are suggesting is a made-in-Alberta solution as a way of ensuring that affluent donors and special-interest groups do not have a back door through which to gain influence.

The bill is also going to change the definition of contributions. For a self-employed person who normally charges fees for their services, if they offer those services to a candidate or campaign, that would be considered a contribution. The normal value of the services they would provide would count toward their contribution limit. Nonmonetary contribution services such as this will be included in the definition of contributions to political entities. Volunteer services are not included in the definition of services, provided that the person providing the volunteer labour is not compensated by their employer or is not being given paid time off to volunteer. Audit and professional services provided free of charge relating to compliance with the act would not be considered a contribution.

All other Canadian jurisdictions include nonvolunteer services in their contribution limits, and this was something that we discussed at length when we were discussing Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. That change has been brought forward here to bring Alberta in line. It also precludes unions, corporations, and other third parties from giving employees paid time off to volunteer for a political campaign.

Bill 35 will ensure that corporations, trade unions, and employee organizations are no longer able to guarantee loans, again something else that came up during our Bill 1 debate. Only individuals ordinarily resident in Alberta would be able to guarantee loans to a political entity or make a payment on a loan or guarantee to a political entity, and that amount would count towards their contribution limits. In this way, loans and contributions go hand in hand, neither being used to gain undue influence.

The second major part of this bill is around spending limits, establishing campaign spending limits of \$2 million for political parties during the writ period and including spending prior to that writ period for items used during the writ period. For by-elections party spending limits would be roughly \$23,000, which is \$2 million divided by 87, approximately. In an electoral division there would be a spending limit of \$50,000 for each candidate. Expenses incurred by the party or constituency association on behalf of the candidate will count as election expenses. Nomination contestants would be subject to a spending limit of \$10,000, 20 per cent of the spending limit for each electoral division.

They would also be required to register with and report to the Chief Electoral Officer when they announce their intention to seek the nomination, begin incurring costs, or accept contributions,

whichever occurs first. These registration and reporting requirements would also apply to leadership contestants.

Spending limits will promote fairness and ensure parties can have a healthy exchange of ideas with voters during election campaigns. I would note that with the exception of the Yukon all other jurisdictions in Canada have spending limits, and they have been found to level the political playing field. Our aim is to effectively ensure that the strength of the parties' ideas are the deciding factor in an election rather than the depth of pockets.

Election expenses will be defined as expenses reasonably incurred by or on behalf of a candidate or a party during the campaign for the purpose of promoting or opposing a party or candidate, so election signs, office space, staff. We do recognize that not all constituencies and campaigns are the same and that urban candidates face different challenges than rural candidates, so spending limits would not apply to candidates' or contestants' travel costs reasonably related to the election contest: transportation, meals, accommodation, care for candidates' or contestants' children or other dependants, expenses related to the disability of the candidate or nomination contestant, audits or other fees necessary for compliance with the act, and incidental expenses like parking and gas incurred by volunteers. Most of these expenses would still need to be included in financial statements and reports to the Chief Electoral Officer. These exceptions are going to help level the playing field for candidates, particularly those in larger ridings or those with children, dependants, or disabilities.

Finally, third-party advertising is the third major focus of our bill. From the dropping of the writ to the close of the polls third-party advertisers would be subject to a spending limit of \$150,000. Of this, no more than \$3,000 could be used to support or oppose candidates in a particular electoral division. This is the same model adopted by both B.C. and used at the federal level. We think that these limits strike a balance between ensuring third parties can express themselves and ensuring smaller voices are not drowned out.

Third parties who are currently eligible to advertise during elections will still be able to share their views but could not make advertising buys that overwhelm the public discourse. When it comes to third-party advertising, focusing on the money they spend is a much more hands-on approach than focusing on the money they receive. No other jurisdiction in Canada uses contribution limits for third-party advertising, and the existing contribution limits that Alberta has operated under will be repealed.

As is currently the case, third parties will be required to register with Elections Alberta when they incur \$1,000 in election advertising expenses, receive \$1,000, or plan to do either. Third parties will be subject to these same registration requirements between elections. Between elections they will also be required to identify themselves in their advertisements, which is already the case during elections. These amendments would require third parties to disclose contributions over \$250 weekly during an election, and those disclosures will be in turn reported to Albertans through Elections Alberta. Between elections third parties would be required to report quarterly, and those contributions would also be made public.

**3:10**

These amendments are intended to avoid hindering any robust political discussion in Alberta while also providing important transparency. Bill 35 continues the improvements that were started with Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. It also takes into account the recommendations made by the Chief Electoral Officer. We believe that the proposed changes would give Albertans back confidence in their electoral process, and we're committed to

ensuring that parties are earning the support of Albertans and not catering to big money and special interests.

I'm pleased to stand in support of this bill, and I look forward to hearing the contributions of my colleagues in this House. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, this has been a very interesting process from the very beginning because there's a lot of what the minister has just spoken about that I agree with. I'm absolutely in favour of getting big money out of politics, I'm in favour of getting undue influence from those of financial means out of the political process, and I think there are a lot of things in this bill that I can agree with and that I like. But there are many things in this bill. It's really unfortunate because we went through a committee process – we talked about this at length last night at second reading – that started off with such promise and, unfortunately, devolved into some challenging times. Now, I would not in any way term that committee a failure. The work that we did, especially on the whistle-blower protection act, was very good work, really thoughtful work, a lot of hard work by all sides, by all parties who were members of that committee.

When it came time to talk about money, as I suppose it so often does, things broke down. There are things that are done in this bill that go far beyond satisfying a public interest. They go far beyond solving a problem that Alberta has. Those of us in this House pay close attention to politics. We surround ourselves with dedicated Albertans who care passionately about our province, and those people put in tremendous amounts of work.

Rarely, if ever, have I heard that one of the big problems we have in this province is constituency associations not reporting frequently enough, not having enough work to do, and Elections Alberta saying: gosh, we need more rigour, more controls over those rogue constituency associations. In fact, one of the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee was to eliminate quarterly reporting entirely, not just for constituency associations but for parties as well. Now, the committee, in its wisdom, decided unanimously, with votes of all members of the committee, including the NDP, that in fact it's probably worth keeping the quarterly reporting for parties so Albertans can keep an eye on what each party is earning on a quarterly basis but to eliminate quarterly reporting for constituency associations.

The rationale at the time was the amount of work that volunteers are expected to do to keep their constituency associations up and running. I will note, again, now for the record that there is only one party in this House that does not have active constituency associations that file financial reports and that collect donations directly from Albertans.

**An Hon. Member:** Which one is that?

**Mr. Clark:** That is the NDP.

So there are two interpretations of why the changes have been made in this bill. One is a generous interpretation. I'm a generous person. My generous interpretation would be that the crafters of this bill sat down and said: "Well, this is the way things work. This is the way we do things, so this shouldn't be a problem, should it?"

Now, a cynical person might say that there was a committee that addressed this at length and that the committee said: "You know, folks, there are other parties that do things differently. In fact, every other party does things differently. So would you mind if we just

eliminated quarterly reporting for constituency associations in its entirety?" And the committee said: "You know, that makes sense. Let's do that." Yet here we are with a bill that not only retains quarterly reporting; it quadruples the amount of work that volunteer financial officers are required to undertake, at the very least quadruples, perhaps even more.

With that, Madam Chair, I will move an amendment to Bill 35, and I will hand this to a page and await your receipt of the amendment before I continue.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. The amendment will be referred to as A1, the first amendment to be received. I'm just waiting for the original copy.

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended as follows:

- A. Section 5(c) is amended in the proposed section 4(1)(e) by striking out "and a registered constituency association".
- B. Section 28(c) is amended in the proposed section 32
  - (a) in subsection (3) by striking out "and registered constituency association";
  - (b) in subsection (3.1) by striking out "3(a)(ii) and (b)(ii)" and substituting "3(a)(ii), 3(b)(ii) and (3.2)(b)";
  - (c) by adding the following after subsection (3.1):
    - (3.2) Every registered constituency association shall file with the Chief Electoral Officer, in the form and manner approved by the Chief Electoral Officer, within the period during which an annual financial statement must be filed under section 42, a return setting out for the previous year
      - (a) the total amount of all contributions received that did not exceed \$50 in the aggregate from any single contributor, and
      - (b) the total amount contributed that, together with the contributor's name and address, when the contribution of that contributor during the year exceeded an aggregate of \$50.

All of that legalese, Madam Chair, means that constituency associations, if this amendment is accepted – and I would certainly encourage and hope that all members of the House would accept this amendment – would no longer be required under the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act to remit quarterly filings. Now, I touched on it in my earlier remarks, but the reason that is important is that for those of us that have parties that have active constituency associations, this legislation is going to require each chief financial officer for each constituency association to remit quarterly not simply the top-line revenue and bottom-line expenses, as is currently the practice, through an online system. They're going to be required to catalogue actively every single donation that exceeds \$50, to take the name and address of each donor, to remit that to Elections Alberta to ensure that Elections Alberta can disclose any contributions that exceed \$250 to that constituency association in the year and then also, of course, co-ordinate with their party to ensure that the amount that that donor has donated does not exceed \$4,000 in the aggregate between the constituency association and the party and, presumably, co-ordinate with other constituency associations to ensure that those donations do not exceed the limit.

Now, the challenge with that, Madam Chair, is that those parties that – shall we call them emerging parties? – do not have the resources, certainly the financial resources to hire someone to . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Did you say merging or emerging?

**Mr. Clark:** Emerging with an "e" at the beginning, yes. Not merging with an "m" yet, at this point. That's for somebody else in the House to deal with, other parties.

But those of us in emerging parties are especially at a disadvantage. A generous interpretation of that, as I tend to be a generous person, would be that that is simply an oversight or a misunderstanding by the crafters of the legislation, that it didn't occur to them. So this amendment offers us an opportunity to fix that oversight or that perhaps misunderstanding. We had that discussion in committee, and it was great.

3:20

A perhaps less generous interpretation is that the government doesn't want to see a party rise up in the middle. They want to see polarization. They want to see a party that purportedly cares about people and the environment be a choice on one side and a party that cares about only money to be a choice on the other and that Albertans will have to make a choice between two bad options. They have to give up something.

I, Madam Chair, believe in both. The Alberta Party believes in both. We believe in strong fiscal discipline and managing money, and we believe in taking care of people and looking out for the environment. That's what we believe in. That's the centrist position. That's what we believe in, but we're in a position where we are an emerging party, and we do not yet have the financial resources or the human resources to easily comply with the rules. We absolutely will should this become legislation, but I can tell you that it will have a significant impact on our volunteers. It is a roadblock that the government is trying to put up to stop the growth of parties that may take some or all of the centrist supporters who held their nose and voted NDP last time or just thought: well, you know, we'll send a message by voting NDP. They're going to try really hard to do everything they can to retain their position, and that's my problem with this particular aspect of the bill and other aspects of this bill.

The government has taken, the NDP have taken what is otherwise a good idea – getting big money out of politics, reducing donation limits, putting campaign spending caps in place: those are good ideas, and they should have stopped there. Those are good ideas. Albertans are onside with that. I think that had they done that, they would have found unanimous support in this House for those ideas. But no. They had to take this good idea and they had to take it too far. They had to lock in their advantage, put their thumb on the scale, tilt the playing field to the NDP while they have the chance.

**An Hon. Member:** Shameful.

**Mr. Clark:** That is shameful, Madam Chair. That is shameful.

There is an opportunity, however, for the hon. minister and the government side to prove me wrong about all of those things, and I sincerely hope I am wrong about those things, and if they accept this amendment and perhaps some others coming from the opposition side this afternoon, then we will find that I am wrong. I will be the very first person to stand up and say: "The government was right. They have done the right thing. I give them credit." I will praise them up and down. I'll put it on Twitter, social media. I'll do whatever I need to do. I'll write the minister a nice note. I will do all of those things. I will put it in *Hansard*. All those things will happen. I won't cross the floor. That would be a step too far, Madam Chair. That would be a step too far.

You know, in all sincerity, this amendment genuinely improves the bill. It makes a substantial difference to all parties in this Assembly and outside of this Assembly who have constituency associations that actively collect donations from Albertans to fund their operations and actively receive those donations as an expression of

Albertans' interest in true grassroots democracy because that is what a constituency association is.

With that, Madam Chair, I would really encourage all members of this House to support this amendment. I do hope the government accepts it. I'd be very interested to hear what they have to say.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I will recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Speaking to the amendment, I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for raising this issue. You know, my connection with this particular question of quarterly versus annual filing actually started back in the last Legislature, when we passed the current Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, and there was a disagreement about quarterly versus annual filing. At that point we did land on quarterly filing. However, it was raised at that point, and some of my colleagues who were in the previous Legislature may remember that it was argued at that point that quarterly filing for the volunteers that are CFOs within the constituency associations may be overly onerous and that it may create a burden whereby these volunteers would be hard to recruit. It's hard to find people to do this particular job because of all the jobs within a constituency association it's the CFO's job that has the most legislation to keep track of and the most requirements as far as quarterly and annual reporting.

Some years later, in the spring of 2015, when I served on the Legislative Offices Committee, the Chief Electoral Officer came to the committee with a request for an increase in his budget. One of the questions I asked was, you know: are there functions that are currently being provided within the purview of the chief electoral office that you view as being excessive, you view as being beyond the requirement for providing the necessary transparency and accountability that our democratic system expects? The Chief Electoral Officer was very clear. He said that the quarterly reporting by constituency associations was, in his view, excessive. It tied up a lot of time and effort and resources in the Elections Alberta office and, in his view, did not add value to the process. He indicated at that time that if that could be reduced from quarterly to annual filing, it would indeed reduce the workload within Elections Alberta. That was something that I filed away.

So when we came to the committee, in fact, we had a rather large number of recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer and from others who had recommendations on the EFCDA. One from the Chief Electoral Officer, or the CEO, was to move from quarterly to annual filing for constituency associations. On August 10, 2016, our committee, on a hot summer day, which I recall very specifically because I was calling in that day, not attending in person, because I was attending the annual Innisfree fair – if you haven't been there, you're certainly missing something. But I called in that day just before the parade was about to kick off and I was to climb aboard the chuckwagon that was going to take me around the streets of Innisfree not once but twice – that's the way we do things.

**An Hon. Member:** A double parade.

**Dr. Starke:** It's a double parade, indeed. You have to buy twice the candy.

On that day, at around 10:20 in the morning, this suggestion was moved. It was moved, and the discussion started about changing from quarterly to annual filing. I remember that day very specifically because although I only phoned in, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who's certainly a passionate spokesman on behalf of democracy and transparency, indicated at about 10:20

a.m. that he was opposed to that suggestion because it was moving in the opposite direction of the transparency that was to be provided by the recommendations for the committee, and therefore he was opposed to moving from quarterly to annual filing. I respect that opinion. There was some more debate.

A little bit later the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw chimed in at about 10:25 or 10:30 – actually, it was closer to 10:30 – and said a similar sort of an argument.

Now, a little bit later the Chief Electoral Officer was asked: what additional benefit is there to quarterly versus annual reporting? This is interesting, and I think this is something that we have to take into account. It is in fact the Chief Electoral Officer whose office has to deal with these reports and who listens to or hears from the various constituency associations across our province. Our Chief Electoral Officer said on that date:

We have heard quite loudly from constituencies that it is taxing on them. The reporting period isn't a month; it's only 15 days, meaning that after the end of the quarter the CFO has 15 days to file the report.

It's actually a reduced timeline than that.

But part of the issue that they encounter is that it does add a disclosure component, not complete disclosure in a sense, because the information as far as the contributions isn't aggregated throughout the four periods, the four quarters.

He goes on to give the details behind that, but at the bottom of his statement he says:

Part of the reason why we're recommending the recommendation that we have [is] if you choose otherwise, we have recommendations in which I think the quarterly reporting would have to be enhanced . . . to make it functional for the CFOs and for our office.

He doesn't agree with that. He says:

There's confusion for the public, who are looking at the quarterly reporting and say: "Well, you're reporting this [but] the numbers are different at year-end. How can this be?"

At the conclusion of his remarks the Chief Electoral Officer says:

All the work that we perform throughout the year on these quarterly reports is pretty much thrown out other than posting on the website for disclosure. That's the only [key] function it provides. It does not assist us whatsoever in the financial review of contributors.

3:30

The Chief Electoral Officer is telling our committee that there is really no added value to all of this additional work that the chief financial officers of all of these constituency associations, who are volunteers, are performing, and that's, you know, a pretty compelling argument.

You know, we had some additional discussion. There was some additional debate, and right around just before 10:40 – and I remember this as clearly as a bell because the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, with whom I've had many spirited discussions on other committees, said, and I would like to quote because I think this is telling:

I'd like to say: never let it be said that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is a hard-headed individual. Never. You've all made some compelling points. I mean, I think that my comments earlier in terms of responsibility I would echo here, but I can understand how this would be a burden on volunteers. Therefore, I retract my previous comments, and I will support this motion.

In the space of 20 minutes through some good, strong debate at committee the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, also the Member for Calgary-Shaw, and all the other members who at one point were against this motion changed their minds. The vote was held, and it was passed unanimously. That's how committees are supposed to work. It was a great day. Perhaps a surprising day but still a great

day. So you can imagine my surprise when we were briefed on this bill a week and a half or so ago and we're told: no; quarterly reporting is back.

**Mr. Rodney:** What?

**Dr. Starke:** You heard it right.

Quarterly reporting is back, against the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer, against the recommendation of the committee, against what makes sense for our volunteer CFOs in all these constituency associations. For some unknown reason, for some unknown rationale, quarterly reporting is back. Well, Madam Chair, I don't see why that change was made. I don't see why the recommendation and the discussion that was so compelling that within a matter of 20 minutes it changed the minds of a number of members who were originally against the recommendation, why that is not part of the current legislation.

To my way of thinking, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, who has proposed this amendment, a reasonable amendment, an amendment that is in keeping with the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer, who I would suggest knows best about some of the pitfalls of elections financing – I think this is a very reasonable amendment. I think it is the kind of amendment that we should be proceeding with, and I certainly hope that it finds support on all sides of the House.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**The Deputy Chair:** Oh, I missed the House.

**Mr. Nixon:** That's okay. I'm just giving you a hard time.

Thank you very much for recognizing me today. I'm excited that I get to work on Bill 35 in Committee of the Whole. I know, Madam Chair, you were able to be in the Chamber yesterday as we discussed this important bill during second reading, and I'm sure that you were fascinated and sometimes even shocked by the things that you heard in regard to this legislation.

Specifically to the amendment that's been brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow, my friend, I have to first say very clearly for the record that I completely agree with this amendment and will be supporting it and highly encourage all of my colleagues to seriously look at this amendment and consider voting for this amendment. I think that it will make this legislation better.

Now, the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster did a great job of articulating some of the debate that happened in the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee over the summer, which I sat on with him, particularly around this issue associated with this amendment in regard to the quarterly reports.

We need to step back briefly, though, Madam Chair, to recognize and to re-address the fact that for much of the committee, the committee was derailed on two issues. The big issue we discussed last night in great detail – we may discuss it more later – was in regard to the government members trying to get their campaign expenses paid for by the taxpayers of Alberta.

The second issue was around what was perceived, certainly by the opposition parties, as an attempt to tilt the playing field in the direction of the incumbent government to benefit the NDP, who, as we have discussed in great detail already as we debated this bill, do not use constituency associations the same way that every other political party in this Assembly does. They do not use constituency

associations to manage finances. They were very, very clear about that yesterday. If you look online, you'll see that the reports that are filed by the NDP make it clear that they do not use constituency associations for their finances. This was discussed in great detail in committee because of the concern that manipulating or moving the rules in a way that would advantage the party not using constituency associations and to hurt or to restrict the ability of constituency associations working for other parties to be able to do their job would automatically advantage the governing party, who do not use constituency associations.

Now, we talked about this quarterly reporting at length with the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer made it clear that this was not needed, was probably overkill when it came to constituency associations and created an unnecessary expense to taxpayers to be able to manage that situation.

The second thing that was talked about in committee in great detail in regard to this was the burden, the unnecessary burden, that it puts on the volunteers in our political system. As you know, Madam Chair, in our political system the core of what makes it work is not the elected MLAs. Quite frankly, it is not our staff, though they are very important, but it is the volunteers that go door-knocking and put up signs. It is the candidates that aren't successful and able to come to this place but are able to put their name forward on the ballot that make our democracy work. Any excess burden that we put on those people for unnecessary reasons just restricts their ability to do their job, makes people not want to participate in the process. It frustrates them.

When you look at that and then take into context the comments that were made by the Chief Electoral Officer that this was probably not needed or was overkill and is costing taxpayers money unnecessarily, then the question would be: why would we want to make constituency associations have a whole bunch more burden that is making it harder for them to do their role when there is no benefit that has been brought forward by any member during the committee to show why they would need to do that? I suspect there will be no benefit brought forward, though I do look forward to hearing from the minister in Committee of the Whole.

The only reason, Madam Chair, I could see – I think it just reinforces what we said in committee, that this is nothing but an attempt to punish the constituency associations or punish the parties that use constituency associations in an attempt to manipulate the rules or to tilt the playing field to the advantage of the governing party. Now, I do hope to hear from the minister that I'm wrong on that. But it just proves – again, by not listening to the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer and not taking into account the advice of every other party that participated in the committee and to disregard the votes of their own members in the committee, who agreed after lengthy discussion that this was the best way to handle situations for volunteer CAs.

Now, the worst part about this, though, Madam Chair, is that this does not impact larger parties nearly as much as it will impact small parties. As the Member for Calgary-Elbow pointed out in his speech, this will cause trouble for our constituency associations and I suspect for the third party's constituency associations. It's disappointing to see the government, you know, interfering and attempting to cause trouble for independent political parties, but it won't stop our parties. We're big enough. We have enough donations and resources that we could hire staff to help our constituency associations. I promise you that we will be there despite maybe some hopes in 2019, and we will replace this government in 2019 even if they want to try to tilt the system in their favour.

But there are other parties that are smaller and trying to grow within our political system, and the party that I sit in today, that I am with today, used to be there. The independent Member for

Calgary-Elbow is the leader of one of those parties. They do not have nearly the amount of resources that some of our other parties have in the system to be able to help those volunteers. Is our goal not to try to make the democratic process as accessible as possible for everybody, to make sure that everybody's views could be heard in the process?

With this amendment we can take a step towards making it easier for everybody to be able to participate in the process, to make it easier for smaller parties, to make it easier for constituency associations. By not supporting this amendment, I would suggest to you, Madam Chair, that this just proves again the opposition's point that during the Ethics and Accountability Committee and so far during the debate on this legislation the NDP are just appearing to be trying to stack the deck in advantage of their political party.

3:40

They get frustrated. They really got frustrated in committee, Madam Chair. I know that you know when we would point that out. We were also at the same time dealing with debates to try to get taxpayers to pay for their political expenses, so there wasn't a lot of trust between the two parties or between the opposition and the government. But I'm hoping that as we work through Committee of the Whole, we'll be able to have an opportunity to restore trust in the government's intentions with our democracy, and to support this obvious motion would be a great first step. It's in line with what the Chief Electoral Officer has suggested. It's in line with what every member, including the NDP members, voted for during committee. It would help protect smaller parties within our system. It would help encourage people to participate in the political process at all levels, all the while saving the taxpayer money and making life easier for the Chief Electoral Officer.

Now, I recognize that we do need accountability in our system, Madam Chair. As you know, I have spoken about it at length already on this bill. But if the government can't show one example of how passing this amendment would make it not accountable, if they can't show that once, then clearly they should support this amendment and make it easier for the political process.

With that, I am going to yield the floor, Madam Chair, in eagerness to hear what the minister feels about this amendment.

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

Just before we move on to the next speaker, I would just like to remind all members of this House that when we are speaking to the debate in Committee of the Whole, we are speaking to the content of the bill. I do recognize that we were in a committee that dealt with many of these issues, but if we could make sure that we're actually speaking to the issues within the bill and not bringing in other things, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be brief. I think the arguments have been well expressed, and I have already congratulated the government on getting rid of large donations from corporations and unions. They have made decisions around levelling the playing field on many levels.

This is an example of a really common-sense amendment that I think, as the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has said, would be a win-win-win: a win for government, a win for opposition parties, and a win for the public purse. I, too, would support this amendment and look forward to the minister's comments.

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

I will now call on the hon. Minister of Labour and responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much to the members who have spoken, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Elbow for putting forward this amendment. I certainly appreciate the arguments put forth in the discussion, but I would suggest that we do not have a situation where either the government accepts this amendment or the government hates democracy.

In fact, we have in this amendment a bit of a slight misunderstanding. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was absolutely correct in recounting some of the conversations that happened with the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer did come to the committee and did present on the current state of quarterly financial reporting and did talk about the fact that it was causing a lot of work for different areas but also that it wasn't providing the value that he needed in his office. As the Member from Vermilion-Lloydminster said, he asked for it to either be removed or be enhanced. What we've done with this bill is that we've actually enhanced the quarterly reporting, as per the request from the Chief Electoral Officer, to make it more valuable, for two reasons. When it was originally discussed at committee, at that point the committee had not come to a decision on any changes to contribution limits.

The Chief Electoral Officer was speaking within the context of \$15,000 per year donations, but that has changed. We are now looking at \$4,000 as a contribution limit, and we've heard concerns from the members of the opposition about the difficulty in tracking that between constituency associations, parties, and whatnot, meaning that it's going to be more important going forward that we have the reporting through the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta to know when people are reaching closer to that \$4,000 cap.

It may be that someone is donating to more than one party. It is not the case that the parties all need to talk to each other and find out who's donated to whom or even for constituency associations to talk to each other because the reporting through a quarterly mechanism is going to be available at Elections Alberta. Hopefully, we can catch anyone who's getting close to that \$4,000 limit ahead of them crossing over, or if someone does donate more than \$4,000, we're not having to deal with anyone who's overdonated all at once at the end of the year in a huge amount of work.

Constituency associations are going to need to catalogue donations – who donated them and when they made that donation – anyway. Whether it's reporting quarterly or reporting yearly, that information needs to be logged and submitted. By doing it on a quarterly basis, we will be more able to catch inaccuracies earlier in the process, and we will be able to monitor whether or not someone is getting close to that \$4,000 limit.

I would just like to repeat that the Chief Electoral Officer asked us to remove it or enhance it, and we've enhanced it. Under section 28(e)(4.1) on page 32 of our current printed Bill 35 is the new section that the Chief Electoral Officer requested be added to give quarterly reporting the value that we need.

I will not be supporting this amendment. I completely respect the members involved and the discussion that was had at committee, but the situation has changed. The contribution limits have been lowered. The quarterly reporting does have value, and it has been enhanced as per a request by the Chief Electoral Officer. I certainly appreciate the discussion on this item, but I will not be supporting the amendment.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Nixon:** I'll be very quick, Madam Chair. I know that the Member for Calgary-Hays would like to speak, and I'm interested in hearing his comments. I do just want to point out to the minister that I listened with interest to her comments, but let's be clear for

the record here today. This government raised donation limits for constituency associations, did not lower them the way that she just indicated there. That's a fact. They've raised them from \$1,000 to \$4,000.

I would also submit, through you, Madam Chair, to her that this shows exactly why this needs to go back to committee, because now she's presenting to this House that the Chief Electoral Officer has changed what he said to us during committee. You know, I think that every member would deserve an opportunity to be able to discuss that with the Chief Electoral Officer.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. I've been listening to the remarks from all the members of the House. There was one thing, Madam Chair, that seems incredibly clear to me, that the goal of the government with this piece of legislation is to tip the electoral field in their favour. It's obvious. It's as obvious as the day is long. And this is only one example. I'll have more to say later because I'm going to try and stick to this amendment that's before us.

It's pretty obvious that when the government is the one political party that doesn't raise money at their constituencies and really raises it through the central politburo model, everything in the centre, and that they're the only ones that won't suffer from this and when the Chief Electoral Officer has made it clear that there is no real value to getting these quarterly statements, this is clearly designed to slow down other parties from raising money, to tilt the scales in the favour of the current governing party. It's as clear as day. I don't know how anybody hearing this, the same thing that I just heard in the last 10, 20 minutes, could come to any other reasonable conclusion.

When I hear the minister stand up and make the most convoluted, nonsensical excuses to try to cover why the government is doing this to tilt the scales in their favour, it's really embarrassing. A government that determined to essentially cheat and push things in their own favour and make it obvious by the light of day that they're doing it: frankly, it's despicable. I think that, for me, this should be on the front page of every paper and every newscast tomorrow because this is a barefaced attempt to tip the electoral scale in one party's favour.

3:50

You know what? I'm going to stop here soon except for the fact that – and I'll talk about this later – this isn't the only thing in the legislation that does that. I will talk more about it later. I won't do it now because, as you know, I think you made a request for us to talk to the amendment before us. This is not the only example where the government has tried to tip the scales in their favour and against everybody else's in this legislation, and I will be only too pleased to expand upon that later on in the debate. Unfortunately, entirely contrary to what the minister said, it really is as simple as that. Either the government supports this, or they don't care about democracy. Clear as day.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I am profoundly disappointed that the government won't even consider this amendment. I find it remarkable that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who stood with the minister at her own news conference to announce this legislation, realizes this is a good amendment. What's the downside in accepting this amendment? What's the downside?

I also note other government members, in particular the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and the Member for Calgary-Shaw, who were part of that committee and, as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster had referenced earlier, had started on one side of this debate and discussion, heard the arguments that were made at committee, and changed their minds. Well, that's good. They realized that, in fact – you know what? – it didn't make sense to have quarterly reporting. I find it remarkable how quiet those members are, and I'd really like to hear the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie's rationale as to why he's changed his mind on this and what his perspective on this is. In fact, I'd like to hear some other government members, the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I'd love to hear your perspective on this as to why you think this is a good idea.

There are lots of members on that government bench who were on that committee and who we have yet to hear from on this issue or any other. How is it that you can stand idly by while your party does exactly the same thing that you railed against the PCs for doing back in the day? It's amazing what happens, what magical terrible things happen when you become the government. It is remarkable how quickly you abandon your principles in pursuit of power and how willing you are to adapt legislation, to reject thoughtful amendments that would make legislation better, that would level the playing field for all parties. I promise you, government members, that you will be in opposition again one day very soon, frankly, not many of you, but your party will be in opposition again one day very soon.

I'll put this on the record right now. When I am in government, I won't tip the scales to favour my party. It's not what Albertans want. Albertans want a fair playing field, Albertans want a fair fight, and when Albertans see that you have put your thumb on the scale and are tilting the system to your advantage, they're going to punish you at the ballot box. That's what's going to happen. That is what's going to happen.

You know, to pick up on the minister's words, this is, quote, unquote, going to provide for enhanced reporting. Enhanced reporting. You wonder if the minister of truth is the 20th minister on that side. Enhanced reporting: really, all that does is burden parties that don't operate like the NDP. That's another word for it, burdening parties that don't act like the NDP. This amendment seeks to level the playing field amongst all parties.

You talk about transparency. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has said that this is about transparency. If it's about transparency, can you tell me the number of times that we've had an issue from Elections Alberta that has accused or reported upon or fined a constituency association or sanctioned any sort of constituency association for malicious or incorrect reporting? Has that ever happened? I don't know if it's ever happened.

This bill, this particular section of the bill, seeks to solve a problem that doesn't exist. That is the very definition of tilting the rules in your favour, using your advantage to bully through changes that advantage your party. This is another brick in the wall. This is exactly the kind of thing that over time Albertans get tired of. This is not the number one issue that Albertans are going to ask about in the next election, but it's yet another in a series of examples of the NDP using their advantage to impose their will and impose their views on the entire system.

And it's not just in elections. It's in electricity. It's in climate change. It's in all sorts of different areas. It's in small business. It's in the minimum wage. There are all kinds of areas where the NDP is applying their world view to tilt the scales in their direction, in their supporters' direction. This amendment seeks to fix all of that. Not just this section of the bill but the whole bill seeks to rig the system, to rig the system in favour of the NDP. It's patently,



fundamentally unfair. I won't stand for it, and I know for a fact that Albertans won't stand for it, Madam Chair. I really encourage everyone in this House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

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

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks to the Member for Calgary-Elbow for the comments, of course. I do think that it's probably time to vote on this shortly. I suspect, I think, that most members will agree with us.

But I do think it's really important to make clear what the Member for Calgary-Elbow said. This clearly just shows that the government continues to intend to do what they were doing in committee, and that is to manipulate the system, rig the system, and try to kneecap the competition to make it easier for them in the next election. That is extremely disappointing, and they should hang their heads in shame. If they think for a minute – a minute – that Albertans won't see through that, they're kidding themselves, and they should get out of the capital and go talk to some real people.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Having been to a lot of these Ethics and Accountability Committee meetings, I think that it's interesting that we're hearing that the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, is saying that we need to enhance quarterly reporting. I would say, if my memory serves me correctly, that I asked this question in different ways to hear how it would impact my local constituency association because I have helped file these financial statements in the past. I specifically asked him: how many days do we have for these quarterly reports after the quarter? The Chief Electoral Officer specifically said that there were 15 days. Now, one of the concerns that I brought up specifically about this was that by the time you get the bank statement to do the reconciliation to be able to do that final quarter, you're usually a week if not more into the quarter. This is a concern because a lot of times what happens is that you just don't have the time to be able to get that quarterly report done. I don't see that problem fixed here or that enhancement being done.

I also never heard him say: by the way, \$250 is too high, so let's go down to \$50. I haven't heard that one as a suggestion either. I did hear him say that this was a burden on his office and that they would prefer annual reporting just because of the fact that we're standardizing it along with the parties. Now, I specifically also asked the CEO: is it possible to be able to track this at that time theoretical \$4,000 through the quarterly reports? I believe he said no, that this isn't possible. It would have to be done when the parties file their final returns, and in that way we would have been able to go through this. So the justification saying that we're going to be using quarterly reports to be able to check to see if people are over this \$4,000 limit is, in my opinion, ludicrous.

What we've got here is an amendment that is supposed to enhance it when all it does is to actually put more of a burden on our poor CFOs that are in our constituencies. This is nothing at all like an enhancement. If anything, it is the opposite of an enhancement. I'll tell you that it is frustrating.

4:00

I had identified during the committee meetings that the government, by not allowing us to complete the committee meetings and bring forward motions so that Parliamentary Counsel can build an

elections act that has all parties putting contributions in there, if they don't do that, then what we're going to end up with is the government cherry-picking what it liked and didn't like. That's exactly what we've got today, that they're cherry-picking. They're getting specific words and saying: well, he must have meant this.

Now, I understand. You know what? *Hansard* has got a lot happening here on what we had talked about because we actually sat quite a bit on this act. I spent a lot of hours in my car driving to Edmonton to contribute what I thought my constituents wanted me to do for strengthening the elections act. I fully agree that we needed to reduce contributions by individuals, and this is something that our party, the Wildrose Party, has been very consistent on.

Now, when we were going forward with this, I said, "Well, okay; if we continue with this quarterly reporting, then we at least should go back to the bucket system," the one thing that you're trying to eliminate because you're creating complexity here. Now what happens is that we've actually got to work with the party, and we also have to work with the constituency association together.

You've got to remember that the party has paid staff whereas our constituency associations are all volunteers. I have heard our members here specifically saying that the difference between us and the government is that we have constituency associations. We actually have volunteers that are in place to be able to strengthen our ability to get those grassroots out, get them involved, get them fundraising, and create activities within our riding, and through those activities we're able to build our grassroots.

Now, again, it appears the government doesn't seem to feel that the grassroots is as important to them as it is to the Wildrose. That is a very distressing point. We continue to bring up as well that in these meetings we really want to be involved in this. The fact is that when we had four pieces of legislation go through this committee, which was labelled as unprecedented – unprecedented – by legal counsel, we're told we're filibustering. I think we did remarkable work, and I will still stand by that.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

We went through the whistle-blower act. Usually we take a whole year for one act. We got one full act completed. Then what happened was that we got, I would say, at least 80 per cent through the Election Act. So then we're starting to move forward – and I see that the minister wants to say something. If she's going to correct me, then I welcome that.

What we need to say is that when we're moving forward with this kind of important restructuring of our elections finance act, why wouldn't you want all parties to be contributing to that? We all have constituents that are wanting to voice their concerns on the direction our government is going.

I have heard that we had too high a limit. I have heard that in the end what we are looking for is to make sure that it's a fair system. To be honest, that is something that I wanted to strive for. I truly feel that in the end what we're looking to do is move Alberta forward. We're trying to ensure that there's no undue influence.

I would like to hear the minister at least say how exactly it is that enhancement equals what we've seen here.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you. I will be brief, speaking to the amendment specifically. The Chief Electoral Officer presented to the committee and suggested that quarterly reporting should be removed or enhanced. The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake is correct that he told the committee that they couldn't use the quarterly reporting to accurately track when someone was going to go over the contribution limits. That is the enhancement that the Chief Electoral Officer

asked us to put in, and that is exactly what section (4.1) does. It adds that year-to-date information so that, specifically, the quarterly reporting will be of value in helping all parties, candidates, constituency associations, leadership contestants, and nomination contestants know on a quarterly basis where an Albertan's political contributions are in relation to that \$4,000 cap.

There is a marked improvement within the context of lower contribution limits and wanting to help the parties involved, to not cause difficulty or have overcontributions all being sorted out at the end of the year for a contribution that maybe took place in February. I know that this formulation here will serve Albertans and will serve transparency. I thank the member for his comments, but that is how it directly addresses what the Chief Electoral Officer had talked about at that committee.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I think I saw the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster stand first. Go ahead.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I have to say that the comments from the minister, as was stated by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, are extremely disappointing, and I will also say that they don't jibe with what is happening with this new bill that has come out, that bears only partial resemblance to the discussions which happened at committee. I think that's the concern, especially the concern of the members of the committee who were there, who discussed this, who debated this, and remember quite well the discussions at committee. And if we didn't remember the discussions at committee, we certainly have them here on *Hansard*.

Now, specifically, what we are talking about is contributions to constituency associations. Under this bill the contribution limit to constituency associations has been raised, not lowered. Let's be really clear on that. The contribution that an individual can make to the constituency association used to be \$1,000 per year, \$2,000 in an election year. This bill makes it possible for one person to give a constituency association \$4,000, so if indeed these enhancements that the minister speaks of are put in because of lowered contributions, that's just not true. The contribution limit hasn't been lowered; it's been raised. It's been raised from \$1,000 to \$4,000, so that explanation just absolutely does not hold any water whatsoever.

Furthermore, Madam Chair, I'd like to point out that the idea that the Chief Electoral Officer somehow changed his mind at some point after the committee's discussions concluded and that somehow this recommendation made on August 10 was based on a higher level of contribution but now that the level was lowered, oh, it meant things were different, well, that's not true either. The old contribution limit was \$1,000. The new contribution level is not lower; it's higher. It's \$4,000. It's specifically talking about contributions to constituency associations.

Now, I will also point out that the Chief Electoral Officer and others in his office were extremely helpful throughout the discussions that we had on this. They were there at every meeting, not just the CEO but his assistant and legal counsel from the CEO's office. They were there, and they were extremely helpful as resources, answered a lot of questions that members had.

4:10

He was there right until September, when we concluded our deliberations. So to suggest that somehow because things changed, something that the CEO said on August 10 was now changed strikes me as odd. If, in fact, that recommendation had changed, I would have expected that he would have said at one of the many meetings we had after August 10: "Oh, just a minute. Things have changed.

Remember when I said on August 10 that quarterly reporting really doesn't help?" To me, this comment just does not hold water. There is something fundamentally out of whack here. [interjection] Well, that's one way to put it.

Now, it has also been also suggested – and I think this is also important – that this requirement puts additional stress and additional reporting requirements on the CFOs of constituency associations right across our province, for all constituency associations. But, specifically, it puts a burden on those constituency associations that actively fund raise, that actively solicit donations. When we look at the very helpfully provided disclosure documents, the financial disclosure documents on the Elections Alberta website, we find that, in fact, the constituency associations of the Alberta New Democrats are particularly inactive in that regard.

In fact, they're so inactive that earlier this summer the young gentleman I introduced earlier discovered that one person is the CFO of some 36 constituency associations of the NDP.

**Mr. Clark:** How many?

**Dr. Starke:** One person. One person files 36 quarterly... [interjections] Well, in a lot of cases – quite frankly, I've looked at the reports – they're just filed blank. The zeros aren't even filled in. So there are a whole lot of zero reports. One person is the CFO of 36 NDP constituency associations.

Yet the minister tells us here how this is levelling the playing field and how this is enhancing democracy, enhancing transparency within our system. Madam Chair, I simply do not believe that. I simply do not believe that there is anything within here. And if indeed it is true, if indeed her statements are true, then why did they vote down a motion to refer this motion to committee, where we could ask the Chief Electoral Officer directly: so why have you now decided that quarterly reporting is something that should happen?

This is a reasonable amendment. This is an amendment that has the support of all four opposition parties. It used to have the support of all of the government members of this committee as well, including a couple of members who admitted in our committee meetings that they had changed their mind, that they originally had a different mindset but that they had changed their mind.

Madam Chair, to me, it is totally baffling that this minister can take the recommendations of the committee, that were passed unanimously, that had the support of the Chief Electoral Officer, and now come back to speak of some discussions that she's had with the CEO that happened as a result of a so-called reduction in contribution limits where, in fact, the contribution limit has quadrupled, gone up by four times, and that that somehow now means that this is a good idea. It is not a good idea.

It is very clearly – very clearly – designed to unfairly advantage parties that do not have active fundraising activities within their constituency association. If you look – and perhaps some of you haven't looked at your own constituency association fundraising or financial statements and financial reports to the Chief Electoral Officer. I suggest that you do. It's very instructive. It won't take you long. It won't take you long at all, and you probably don't even need an auditor.

In fact, if you look at those reports, Madam Chair, you will find that the workload of the chief financial officer – officers, I should say. There's more than one although one does take care of 36 different constituency associations. The chief financial officers that file reports on behalf of that party, the governing party, that is suggesting quarterly reporting is a good idea, have a pretty easy workload whereas over on this side, for those parties that have constituency associations that actively fund raise, that actively solicit donations, they've got a lot more work to do. Now they're going to make that

workload even harder. It only benefits the governing party, and it is unfair. It is completely unfair.

Madam Chair, speaking from a certain degree of experience, hard-earned, I can tell you that Albertans have a tremendous sense of fairness, and when they see something that is unfair, they don't treat it kindly. There has been fundamental unfairness done in the past by governments, and some of it was done by our party when we were in government, and we were rightly punished for doing that. That's fine. I acknowledge that, and we have received what we deserved.

But, Madam Chair, this government promised to do better. This government was, as was coined by my former colleague – well, she's still a colleague – the Member for Calgary-North West, the Doing Things Differently Gang. That's what it was. That was a great phrase: the Doing Things Differently Gang. So the Doing Things Differently Gang rides again. Sadly, you're not doing things that much differently. Really, Albertans expect better. Albertans expect much better.

This is fundamentally a fair amendment. It is an amendment that follows a recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer as it was stated to the committee, not in some mysterious discussions that happened after the committee finished its work. I think that if indeed the Chief Electoral Officer has had a change of heart, then it is only fair that this matter be referred to a committee that can ask the Chief Electoral Officer why he's changed his mind. But that was suggested and was voted down last night by the government majority.

Madam Chair, I'm in favour of this amendment. The arguments made by the minister are, to me, absolutely invalid. They completely fly in the face of what we know to be the truth, that was presented at committee. In addition to that, it suggests that the Chief Electoral Officer's mind was changed, and I would like to be able to confirm that directly by having a conversation with him before we consider defeating this amendment, as the minister has suggested.

So I would urge all members of the Legislature to vote in favour of this very reasonable amendment for the sake of the fairness to all political parties that operate in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I appreciate that. Now, since we've been in opposition, since May 5 of last year a lot of things have changed, believe me. But one of the things that's changed is that we've had supporters and donors to our party fall away, some because they don't support us. But – I'll tell you what – a disturbing number have said, "You know, we're not going to go on your boards anymore. We're not going to give you money anymore." Even though the NDP doesn't raise any money at the constituency level, what they do is read the reports very carefully, and then people say that if they find them on a PC board or giving money, they and their companies won't be welcome to do business with the government. We hear that a lot. Now, I know that doesn't sound nice, but I'm telling you the truth. We've heard this from people.

That, actually, unfortunately, leads to a more nefarious conclusion on what the government's position is on this because if the government is using their power as government to intimidate people and pressure them to not support, certainly, our party – and I assume that if it's our party, it's other parties that are in opposition to the legislation as well – then of course they would have an interest in having a year of that same intimidation before an election instead of just three months. Think about that. Think about that. People are right now afraid to give money and be on boards and stuff for

opposition parties, you know, and some of them say: we'll support you at the time when we can, but right now we can't do it because this government is here. Well, right now this adds to that intimidation period, from three months to a year before the next election. In my mind, this really puts a big exclamation mark on the fact that the government, by not supporting this particular amendment, is interested in tilting the scales in their favour.

4:20

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Sure, Madam Chair. Yeah. I'm speaking in support of the amendment from the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, but I do have some serious concerns here because some of the points raised today by the Member for Calgary-Elbow and the Member for Calgary-Hays are really concerning. The Member for Calgary-Elbow said that the system is being rigged to tilt in favour of the NDP. This is a serious matter, rigging the system by a party which is all about accountability, transparency, and all that. Before they got into government, when they were sitting on this side of the House, those were their values, and now I don't know what happened to that.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow is saying that they're seriously attempting to tilt the balance, which is very undemocratic and very unfair to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who most often worked with that side of the House although he sits on this side of the House. He's being targeted now. His party is being targeted. When I say "targeted," that's this bill reducing the ability of his party to survive. Both leaders, from the Alberta Party and the Liberal Party, happen to be from the same city I come from, so my entire Calgary Wildrose caucus is sympathetic to them.

The point, you know, that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster said: they made mistakes. Nobody's perfect. They said that they made mistakes, and they were punished, and they feel remorseful about that, which is great, and they're willing to improve.

We're not perfect. We're willing to learn from our mistakes, too, but we are grassroots driven, so that means that the NDP has no respect for those common, regular Albertans who spend hundreds and thousands of hours to participate in this democratic process and keep the democracy alive. It's not fair to those volunteers when the NDP is trying to rig the system.

What the Member for Calgary-Hays says, if that is true, if the donors are feeling intimidated by the ruling party, is not good. I don't know how these members in the front row there on the government side can, you know, take it easy when there are serious allegations like this. It's really important. They have to at least apply common sense when they work in this House, when these kinds of reasonable amendments come from members who usually, actually – you know, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View most often is very sympathetic to them. At least when he's talking about fairness, they should pay attention and listen to him.

That's why I'm going to vote in favour of this amendment, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I actually thought that we were getting close to possibly voting on this. Then some of the comments I heard from the minister in regard to what the Chief Electoral Officer may or may not have said in committee I found alarming, so I quickly went and had a look. I, of course, was present when this discussion was happening in the committee as a member of the committee. The discussion that happened in the committee about

the content of this amendment happened in great detail, and several conversations took place with the Chief Electoral Officer present.

He gave some comments on this very issue, and I'm going to quote him. He said:

Yes, we have heard quite loudly from constituencies that it is taxing on them. The reporting period isn't a month; it's only 15 days. It's actually a reduced timeline . . .

But part of the issue that they encounter is that it does add a disclosure component, not complete disclosure in a sense, because the information as far as the contributions isn't aggregated throughout . . . the four quarters. So you can contribute \$200 each quarter. [When you do that] you're never captured as far as public disclosure. At year-end you're captured because it's over the \$250 contribution limit for public disclosure. As a result, when you look at it from an accounting perspective, when you're completing the financial statements, what you report on a quarterly basis does not reconcile with what you're reporting on an annual basis. So there's confusion for the public, who are looking at the quarterly reporting and say: "Well, you're reporting this. The numbers are different at year-end. How can this be?" The same thing is happening with the CFOs.

Volunteer CFOs, I might add.

They're performing all this work, but it doesn't complement what they're doing at the end of the year.

That's part of the reason why we're recommending the recommendation that we have. If you choose otherwise, we have recommendations in which I think the quarterly reporting [could be maybe] enhanced in order to make it functional for the CFOs and for our office. All the work that we perform throughout the year on these quarterly reports is pretty much thrown out . . .

Madam Chair, thrown out.

. . . other than posting on the website for disclosure. That's the only function it provides. It does not assist us whatsoever in the financial review.

To me, particularly the last line, "does not assist us whatsoever in the financial review": that's the Chief Electoral Officer, not me, saying that.

He also said that all the work they do that has to happen because of this reporting is thrown out, completely useless, has no benefit. The Chief Electoral Officer said very clearly that it has no benefit, and the minister wants to rise in this Assembly and indicate that the Chief Electoral Officer is saying something different? I certainly would like to hear from the Chief Electoral Officer because right there in *Hansard* – and I'd like to do a shout-out to the good people at *Hansard* because they usually get it right – it's very, very clear that, no, that's not what's happening. They're throwing out the work that these poor volunteers have to do because it has no benefit to the process whatsoever. No benefit.

The minister tried to indicate that it was because we are now lowering contribution limits, that for some reason this would all of a sudden have benefits when, in fact, this government is getting ready to increase the contribution limits to constituency associations. So that argument doesn't hold water.

When we look at it, the Chief Electoral Officer says that there is no need for it, it has no benefit, and it puts a tremendous burden on volunteers who participate in the electoral process. Then we have to ask ourselves: why would the government want something like this that just costs taxpayers money, has no benefit? The Chief Electoral Officer says they just throw out the information, so it's essentially just a waste of everybody's time. Why, Madam Chair, would the government want to waste people's time?

When you start to look at the situation, you realize that they don't use constituency associations for fundraising. They don't have CFOs wasting their time on this, so the only reason that they would disregard what the Chief Electoral Officer said is to make opposition parties of every stripe and on every side of the political

spectrum have to waste their volunteers' time so they could benefit. The minister wants to rise and try to convince us that this is not being done to benefit the New Democratic Party of Alberta after reading that?

The explanation that the minister provided in regard to that, Madam Chair, is ridiculous. It's ridiculous. It is clear when you read this that the governing party, the NDP, is attempting to stack the deck, rig the system, fix it for themselves, tilt the playing field to their advantage, manipulate the rules, and kneecap the competition. They're forgetting that they used to be a small party in our political system, and I can assure you that they will be a small party again in our political system if they continue this behaviour.

The minister should rise and explain . . .

**An Hon. Member:** There is no explanation.

**Mr. Nixon:** There is no explanation for it, I don't think.

. . . why she thinks that she can change what the Chief Electoral Officer said and how she can justify to this House that the information is just being thrown away, that it's costing taxpayers money and has absolutely no tangible benefit for accountability in our political system except for wasting good volunteers' time and trying to kneecap the competition to advantage the incumbent government. Again, shame on you guys. It's ridiculous.

4:30

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I also went and found the place in *Hansard*, like my colleague. You know, he did a really good job of moving that one section that the Chief Electoral Officer brought forward, but I want to go a little bit ahead to what was said. I'm going to go partway through. I was talking about these annual returns, and I said:

So this is a true hardship put on constituency associations. That's the real point here, that it's not easily done in those two weeks.

These are volunteers. We need to be flexible, and we're not flexible right now. I think that the past government who brought this in tried it to see if it would add to transparency, and I would argue that it's done the exact opposite.

Then we have the Member for Edmonton-Decore:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the CEO, just a couple of really quick questions, then. Have you found that constituency associations, then, are struggling with this whereas if we had gone to yearly reporting, that would probably make it a little bit easier for them?

This is where our Chief Electoral Officer goes:

Yes, we have heard quite loudly from constituencies that it is [quite] taxing on them.

And he goes on as through my past colleague, so I don't want to go into that entire dialogue.

But I do want to go, after that dialogue, back to the Member for Edmonton-Decore. He goes on to say, after the Chief Electoral Officer had made all of those comments:

Okay. I guess, Madam Chair, just a quick comment, then. I mean, I guess, you know, if you quickly look at what's being proposed here, maybe on the outside it's possible that it would look like disclosure is being reduced when in actuality it's not. I certainly appreciate the member's concerns, and I'm hoping that maybe we've managed to clarify things a little bit. I'm happy to support this motion,

which was the motion to make it annual.

I guess for folks that are more interested in seeing it on a quarterly basis, maybe they're just going to have to stay tuned a little bit longer.

That is the truth because we're going quarterly, still. I guess we're going to have to wait until the next government.

But let's go back to what my colleague had said. I will say that what's important here is the last part of his comments. Just from the CEO:

That's part of the reason why we're recommending the recommendation that we have.

His recommendation was to go to annual.

If you choose otherwise, we have recommendations in which I think the quarterly reporting would have to be enhanced in order to make it functional for the CFOs and for our office.

Now, it's important to say that he threw that in, saying that quarterly just isn't working – this is a burden; it's just not working – but if you have to have it here, you at least should maybe change it up some. He didn't ever say that enhancement is the route to go. That is cherry-picking what the CEO had to say from these comments.

Again, bringing back my original concerns that the government would go through this and pick and choose what they want even though the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee had brought this motion forward by way of one of my colleagues. The motion was debated to go from quarterly to annually. The committee came to a decision that this was the right move to take. We had members from the government agreeing that this was the route to go, yet here we are. We've got a government pushing through quarterly even though it is very apparent that the only people that will be benefiting by leaving it a little bit longer or staying tuned is the government.

They have not justified this well enough. That is why Calgary-Elbow has brought forward a very good amendment that we need to consider. Even though this amendment originated as a motion from the Wildrose and he is carrying this flag into this House, we will support this because it is the right thing to do. Volunteers need to be respected, and it appears that this government is not taking in the thoughts of the volunteers in any regard, shape, or form. They're just going and ramming things through.

They're saying that because we're adding input to this, we're against reducing the contribution limits, and that is totally false. We need to establish that we can make this better. We can actually make this nonpartisan, but it's the government that is making this partisan.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:36 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	Loewen	Starke
Cyr	McIver	Stier
Drysdale	Nixon	Swann
Gotfried	Panda	van Dijken
Hunter	Rodney	

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	McKittrick
Carlier	Hinkley	McLean
Carson	Horne	McPherson

Connolly	Kazim	Miller
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Piquette
Dach	Littlewood	Renaud
Drever	Loyola	Rosendahl
Eggen	Luff	Shepherd
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sweet
Goehring	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Totals:	For – 14	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Back on Bill 35. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to move an amendment. I have the appropriate number of copies for the pages, which I will hand to them, and I'll wait till they get to the table.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The amendment I'm bringing forward is that I move that Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended in section 28(c) in the proposed section 32 by striking out subsections (3) and (3.1).

It is a very simple amendment, Madam Chair. As we just witnessed in this Chamber, the last amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow was voted down, unfortunately, by the government in their clear process to continue to tilt the playing field to their advantage. But in the spirit of recognizing that the government has already made their decision in regard to quarterly filing, I do want to point out as I talk about this amendment that this amendment will still maintain the current provision for quarterly filing by constituency associations though we still fundamentally disagree with that.

Madam Chair, the current act means that volunteer CFOs for constituency associations only have to file the total amount of contributions received during the quarter and at the end of the year that did not exceed \$250. The government's proposal is to lower that amount to \$50, to lower the amount from \$250 to \$50. This limit will make it incredibly difficult for the volunteers who make the constituency associations operate. It is very similar to what we discussed in the previous amendment. A good reminder I think for all of us as we continue to debate these important issues around Bill 35 is that we are talking primarily about volunteers that deal with the party finances, particularly around constituency associations, except, as has been pointed out – it's very relevant again to this amendment – not by the governing party.

One of the members in this House yesterday pointed out that the hardest position they have to fill on their constituency association board is their CFO, and I completely agree with him. It is a tough job. If you're sitting there for any board, not just on political boards, it's often the one where people are often most volun-told or really, really begged to be able to participate in it because it's tough. Making it harder for these volunteers will force people out of that position. I can guarantee you that, Madam Chair.

Fifty dollars a quarter and \$200 a year is not big money in politics. It's not, and we all know that. There is not one credible argument that could be brought forward by the government – though I suspect they're going to try to invent a credible argument, and I look forward to watching that – that \$50 or \$200 is big money

in politics, particularly, Madam Chair, when this minister is bringing through legislation right now to raise the donation limit by 400 per cent on constituency associations. Four hundred per cent on constituency associations. Four hundred per cent. Taking the donation limits on constituency associations from a thousand dollars to \$4,000 is a significant increase. A significant increase.

Then to put forth the argument to take what volunteers across the board are currently reporting at \$250 and bring it down to \$50 cannot be justified by the NDP as taking big money out of politics. Again, similar to the last discussions that we had on the last amendment, the only benefit that it will have is to make things harder for volunteer CFOs who work – and I think you’re going to see a theme throughout the evening, Madam Chair – for constituency associations for the opposition parties because the government does not use constituency associations when it comes to financial management, which is their right. But it surely is not appropriate for them to continue to try to manipulate the rules and kneecap the competition on the other side that does use constituency associations.

Again, the government keeps rising and saying: no, that’s not what we’re trying to do; we’re trying to make it more transparent. You know, they’ll tell you everything. But when you come and you look at it, it doesn’t add up. That dog doesn’t hunt. It is so obvious what is being done here, and it’s so wrong and in some ways sad. There was so much common ground on this legislation between all the parties that we actually could have had a bill passed that would have been supported by all parties inside this Assembly, which, I would argue to you, Madam Chair, is what Albertans would have liked to see when we’re talking about something as fundamentally important as their democracy.

Having to record the name, the address, and the date of the contribution by every contributor that gave over \$51 for a year, in my view, is ridiculous. It’s not big money in politics. It doesn’t make anything more transparent, and it does nothing but punish volunteers for putting their hands up and saying: “Yeah, I’ll help. Yeah, I’ll help make the political process work. I’ll help participate. I’ll give up a night a month to work on the books for a constituency association. I’ll skip, you know, one of my kid’s events that I may want to go to because I believe in the political process, I believe so much in the political process.” You know, in my constituency my CFO believes so much in the political process that she often gets in a car and drives upwards of an hour and a half to a constituency association meeting, sometimes on the other side of my constituency, which is 25,000 square kilometres and a big job for those volunteers. A big job for those volunteers. And not once during committee did anything come forward that would justify this silliness, Madam Chair.

At the same time, I want to make it very, very clear that we’re going to take it from \$250 a year to \$50 a year at the same time that this government is now increasing – increasing – contributions to constituency associations by four times the previous amount. They’re the ones trying to get big money out of politics? I don’t think so, Madam Chair. I do not think so.

Well, and the hon. minister is laughing, but, again, four times the previous limit is increasing contribution limits.

5:00

**Mr. Feehan:** You’re misstating the truth.

**Mr. Nixon:** He’s telling me that I’m not telling the truth. Through you, Madam Chair, I am telling the truth. This bill increases it to \$4,000 a year. Try reading your brief, sir. I am telling the truth.

**Mr. Feehan:** No, you’re not.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order, Madam Chair. The minister wants to keep telling me that I’m not telling the truth. I think that’s completely against all of the tradition of this Assembly.

**The Chair:** You wish to raise a point of order? What is your citation on this point of order?

#### **Point of Order Parliamentary Language**

**Mr. Nixon:** The minister keeps telling me that I’m not telling the truth, referring to and implying that I’m lying. First of all, it is completely – completely – ridiculous, when their own bill says that they increased it to \$4,000, to say that we’re lying about quoting their bill.

That aside, Madam Chair, you know and I know that there’s a long tradition in this Assembly to not use the word “truth” or imply that somebody is not telling the truth in this Assembly. That’s disappointing coming from a cabinet minister, and the cabinet minister should rise and apologize and withdraw those comments.

I’m referring to 23(i). Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I don’t think I can consider this a point of order as the minister did not have the floor and did not speak those words on the record. It’s heckling.

I would, however, caution the House to be careful in the words that you say when heckling, to not create disorder.

**Mr. Nixon:** You know, heckling can be a point of order, Madam Chair, but I will respect your ruling. I do hope that my colleagues note that they can now heckle that ministers aren’t telling the truth, because that’s ridiculous.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I just reminded the House not to heckle those kinds of things.

**Mr. Nixon:** Excellent. I agree. They shouldn’t heckle those kinds of things. I agree with you, Madam Chair. It’s very disappointing to see that from a cabinet minister, I must say.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Nixon:** Let’s be clear, then, because he raised it. The old rules, that will go away after we pass this legislation, cap the donation limits at \$1,000 for a constituency association. This government is raising that limit to \$4,000. To the minister: that is not lying. It is a fact that you are raising that. Thank you very much.

Why would we lower it to \$50 on the other side when they’re already raising the limit for constituency associations? The only argument that could be brought forward for that is that, again, it’s another example of the NDP Party trying to fix this process for themselves, trying to use their majority in the Legislature to rig the system for themselves.

Now, sadly, it’s not going to hurt the bigger parties. It’s going to be tougher, but we’ll get through the process. We’ve got pretty big teams, and we’re able to do it. It’s going to hurt the smaller political parties. It’s going to hurt the start-up political parties that want to get into the process, the ones, I would submit to you, Madam Chair, they’re most scared of because they’re on their side of the political spectrum.

To manipulate our democracy through legislation to advantage the governing party is shameful. Shameful. So by bringing forward this amendment, we’re giving them the ability to say: “Whoa. We made a mistake, just like we did when we tried to get our campaign expenses paid for. Whoa. We made a mistake. Thank you,

Opposition, for saving us again from this terrible mistake. Thank you.”

Rise, and do the right thing, and vote for this to make it easier. Stop the silliness of trying to stack the deck to the advantage of that political party.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre states that the only possible reason for the lowered limit would be that the government is trying to rig the process. I can assure him that is not true. In the submission that the Chief Electoral Officer made to the committee on October 19, 2015, recommendation 34 states, “if the Legislature retains quarterly reporting, section 32 should be amended to include details of the under-\$250 [donations] and include receipts – then get to year-end, [you] only have a quarter left. It will be more functional.” This lowered limit is following the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer.

I will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I wish I could say that I was surprised by that. I’m not surprised, yet still disappointed. You know, the hon. minister has read a portion of *Hansard*, and the portion of *Hansard* she read started with the word “if.” The “if” refers to, as we’ve heard from a couple of hon. members here in reading out the full content of what the Chief Electoral Officer talked about – and I won’t read the full *Hansard*. Instead, I’ll give the gist of what he said, which is: well, I guess if you’re going to keep it, make it meaningful, but my strong preference is to get rid of it entirely. That was the essence of what the Chief Electoral Officer said. In fact, he was so persuasive that he convinced the government members of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee to change their votes and change their minds on quarterly reporting. So the committee unanimously said that they wanted to get rid of quarterly reporting. For the minister to cherry-pick the little bits and pieces she wants is disingenuous in the extreme.

The argument that we need this provision – and I am rising on the amendment, to speak strongly in favour of the amendment from the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. The government is saying: “Well, this way we’re going to know. This way we know when someone crosses the \$350 threshold.” We will still know, Madam Chair, but every constituency association’s financial officer will now need to do the work four times a year – that’s four times the amount of work – not just once a year. The result of that is that parties are going to have no choice but to take that accountability away from their constituency association’s chief financial officer, which means that all fundraising will funnel through the party, which means that grassroots democracy is sacrificed. [interjection] I missed that, Calgary-Hawkwood. What was that? I didn’t hear what you had to say. I’m always interested in what the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood has to say.

Again, as said many times this afternoon and many times yesterday and many times in the committee, every single party in this Assembly works a certain way except for one. We have the one that has the ability to ram through legislation using their majority, and that’s what they’ve chosen to do. It’s disappointing in the extreme that they’ve done that, but that’s what they’ve chosen to do. It seems to be: “Well, I guess that’s just what we do as a majority government. Hey, we’re in charge now. Let’s just impose our will.”

That is not what Albertans wanted when they elected this government. Albertans had higher expectations. Albertans had high hopes that things would actually be different, that they would have

a government that actually listened to the people. But I understand now why they’re not, because this isn’t a government of the people, because they don’t have connections with their communities, because they don’t have strong constituency associations. [interjection] My friend from Calgary-Klein asks me how I know that. Well, I know that because I’ve looked at the financial reports for each and every one of your constituency associations, and your constituency associations have no connection to community.

Now, I will acknowledge that there are certain members on the government side who have strong connections to their communities. It’s not a universal statement in the slightest, but it really does speak to a philosophy and a way of governing and a way of operating which is highly centralized and: we’re going to tell you what to do. The best way for this House to operate and for democracy to work is for the grassroots, the people of Alberta, through each one of us, to tell us what to do.

We throw this word “grassroots” around. You heard my eloquent and wonderfully passionate point of order earlier today about the importance of backbench questions. The essence there – and this ties to the amendment, because I can see the Chair wondering where I’m going with this. What this speaks to in this amendment is the restoration of grassroots democracy. The point of order that I made earlier today was about the importance of government members having the flexibility and freedom to ask a truly meaningful – truly meaningful – question of the front bench. That is the job of each one of us in this House who are private members. This provision in the bill takes away the connection to our community because it centralizes everything. That’ll be the only choice parties have. So it imposes that we must work, all of us, in the same way that the NDP works. That’s not why Albertans elected this government.

I want to see the backbench members on that side have more power. I want to see them have a stronger voice. I want to see them stand up and hold the government accountable, genuinely do that. You do that when you have better connection to community. If we pass this amendment, we will have a bill that enables stronger and better connection to community. That is what Albertans elected all of us to do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

5:10

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. This is a good amendment. It just brings some common sense to things. If the government won’t support it, it’s just one more example of how they’re trying to tilt the scale in their favour in the next general election. This whole piece of legislation is scaled that way. They have a \$2 million per party spending cap but no realistic caps on what the government could spend.

Today we know that the government is up there spending \$9 million on the carbon tax plan, more than four parties will be allowed to spend combined in the next general election, and they’re spending it out of taxpayers’ dollars to support propaganda for this government on one policy. Now, if ever there’s an indicator that this government, through this piece of legislation, is trying to tilt the scale in their favour using taxpayers’ dollars – they contact members of our party saying: don’t be on their list of supporters or on their board or you will not be doing any business with our government.

You know what, Madam Chair? This is the government indicting themselves on bad behaviour, on using taxpayers’ dollars to tilt the electoral scales in their favour. I’m not a lawyer, but there’s a part of me that’s surprised this is legal.

I will be supporting the amendment but, I can assure you, not the legislation attached to it.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have two questions, specifically. My honoured colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre was putting forward some compelling arguments on why this is such a good idea. One of the members from across the aisle continued to not go through the chair, but she did mention something, and I'm curious where she was going with it. She continued to say: CRA, CRA. I would love to hear how CRA has anything to do with this. I'm assuming that she's meaning the Canada Revenue Agency and not some other agency. So if she could answer what exactly she means by CRA and how this specific amendment will – I'm very curious where that member was going with it.

Secondly, we heard the Minister of Labour get up and say that this is a great idea and that the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, recommends this. I guess it's a matter of debate. I would say that the CEO adamantly disagrees with it. To be clear, I would love to hear a reason from the Labour minister, other than a pitched sentence from a report from the CEO, on why she believes that it should be reduced from \$250 to \$50. I think that's a reasonable concern. The fact is that I believe that the government doesn't have any idea why they're doing it. No idea. That's why I'm saying that we need to hear from the minister, other than a statement produced by the CEO, on exactly what it is, how going from \$250 down to \$50 is going to help with accountability and transparency at a constituency level or even in filing their annual return.

Now, the one thing I will mention, that brings another question, I think, that should be answered, is that we raised the level that you could donate to a constituency from \$1,000 to \$4,000. We quadrupled – we quadrupled – the amount you could donate to a constituency, but we divided by five what the constituency is required to report. That is the strangest thing that I've ever heard. The two in no way, shape, or form seem to work with each other.

Again, why is it that the minister feels that \$250 is a number that seems to be not reasonable in this case? I guess she's enhancing it. Again, I am agreeing with my members that it is taking something out of context because I actually was at that meeting, like many of the Ethics and Accountability Committee members, and they were saying that we are trying to make sure that we're moving forward in a clear and transparent method, yet we're cherry-picking – and I'll continue to use the word – sentences and phrases that are out of context that I don't believe the actual CEO meant or wanted to derive from there.

Now, the thing that it does do, this lowering it down, is that it is going to create a lot of work for our local constituency associations. Again, it puts a burden on the volunteers, which is something we had mentioned before, with the past amendment.

Now, I'm going to say that we already talked specifically about the quarterly reporting. That is an important one that we need to derive. In the end, I don't think the government has made a very good or compelling case on why we shouldn't go to annual, but we voted on it, and – fair enough; the government does have the majority of votes – they voted down our CFOs being able to reduce the amount of burden that's on the volunteers. It seems to be that, I guess, they have more volunteers than they know what to do with at their constituency levels. It explains why they have so many of them without any actual formed boards.

I am going to read another quote from Calgary-Shaw.

Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, you know, I want to echo that the initial concerns I heard from [the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie] I shared . . . For myself, I come from sort of a corporate background, so to speak, so quarterly reporting is a very common practice, especially for transparency and to make sure that your practices are being obliged properly. But I did hear some very compelling arguments from the members of the third party and other political parties as well that this isn't a business . . .

This is a key word: this isn't a business.

. . . that these are volunteers, and that there's a lot of anxiety that comes from quarterly reporting as well.

So by reducing this from \$250 down to \$50, we are actually creating more anxiety for these volunteers. It was acknowledged that this is a problem yet ignored again by this government. That is frustrating when it comes to the fact that this all-party committee debated it, moved it forward, and nowhere in that all-party committee did we actually really mention why we would be reducing this from \$250 down to \$50. There were no compelling arguments from the government when they had the opportunity during that time frame, but what we do have is some legislation sitting in front of us that is going to cause some grief to my local constituency association.

Yet here we are, another government making another decision, and they had the actual consultation from the CEO, but they chose to ignore it, and that does seem to be a common practice of this government.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

5:20

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to speak in favour of this amendment. It's been kind of a strange day, I think, when we look at what we've discussed today based on the government's name of the bill, Fair Elections Financing Act, and we also look at what the government's intent was, which they say over and over and over again was to get big money out of politics.

The last amendment we worked on was about quarterly reporting. Now, I don't know what's unfair about doing annual reporting, and I don't know where that comes in to getting big money out of politics, but it was bizarre to hear the minister say that the Chief Electoral Officer said that it needed to be enhanced, so it needed to be done. But, of course, when we read exactly what the Chief Electoral Officer said, he said, "That's part of the reason why we're recommending the recommendation that we have. If you choose otherwise, we have recommendations in which I think the quarterly reporting would have to be enhanced." So he's made a recommendation, clearly, and he's saying: if you don't take my recommendation, then we're going to have to do something different.

When the Chief Electoral Officer makes a recommendation, it's probably a good idea to take it, especially when he goes on to say, "These quarterly reports [are] pretty much thrown out other than posting on the website for disclosure. That's the only function it provides. It does not assist us whatsoever in the financial review." We just went through that process, and somehow the government thinks there's something in fairness about that. Obviously, the Chief Electoral Officer has no problem with it, in fact, is suggesting the opposite. There's nothing about big money there. It's not even any dollars we're talking about. We're just talking about the quarterly reporting.

Now, it was also interesting to hear the Minister of Indigenous Relations spouting off in a heckle, accusing somebody, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, of not telling the truth



when he suggested that presently you can donate \$1,000 to a constituency association. That's a fact. That's clear. With this new act, the Fair Elections Financing Act, you can now donate \$4,000 to a constituency association a year.

**Mr. Nixon:** I think that's more, isn't it, Member?

**Mr. Loewen:** I think that might be a little more. I think that's very clearly more, and for somebody, especially a minister, to accuse another member of not telling the truth when the facts clearly point to the opposite: I find that – I can't even think of a word for it, Madam Chair. It's appalling. It's deeply disappointing.

Now, here we are with another amendment, and we're talking about whether the constituency associations need to do extra paperwork for \$50 donations. Right now it's \$250. This bill, this act, is suggesting that we go from \$250 down to \$50 for this extra recording paperwork. I don't know what's unfair about a \$250 recording. I can't see anything unfair about that, but if we're going on to the government's other excuse for doing all this, if it's getting big money out of politics, well, we're going from \$250 down to \$50. That makes no sense at all either.

Madam Chair, I've worked in a constituency association before. The people responsible for doing the filing within the constituency association: good, hard-working, honest volunteers doing their best. Every quarter they get stressed out about filing these papers because they know these papers have to be done properly, and they don't want to make any mistakes. They want to do it to the best of their abilities. They want to make sure that they don't bring any harm to the party. They want to make sure that everything is just right. So it creates a lot of stress. Now, what we're doing here today with this Fair Elections Financing Act, getting big money out of politics, is that we're increasing the work, we're increasing the stress of volunteers when all they want to do is to be involved in the political process and help out and have their opportunity in the political process and help out the party that they believe in.

These two amendments are purely common-sense amendments. There's no good reason why this government doesn't accept them. One the government has already voted down. It's shameful – shameful – to think that this government thinks that annual reporting, just like us doing our taxes annually, is somehow unfair or somehow gets big money out of politics. That's not the case, Madam Chair. Members on all sides need to support this amendment and bring back some common sense to the discussion on this bill altogether because so far common sense has been lacking here.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll ask the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:28 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	Loewen	Rodney
Cyr	McIver	Starke
Hunter	Nixon	Stier

5:30

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hinkley	McPherson
Carlier	Horne	Miller
Carson	Kazim	Phillips
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Coolahan	Larivee	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Drever	Luff	Shepherd
Eggen	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Sweet
Goehring	McLean	Westhead
Gray		

Totals: For – 9 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I am going to move another amendment, and I will send the copies up with the page and wait for you to give me permission to continue.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The amendment is quite long, so I won't read it unless you require me to read it. The core of what it does is that the amendment triggers most of the act to come into effect on January 1 instead of having three different timelines, where different parts of the act are triggered by different rules.

I would submit to you, Madam Chair, that this is a common-sense amendment which will let every party and their volunteers maintain the reporting rules that are currently in place until the end of the quarter that we are currently in. In no way does this amendment change any of the proposals that have been brought forward by the government in this current legislation, even the ones that we disagree with.

Having a successful system where volunteers can make an impact without unreasonable changes I think is important to our democracy. I'm sure that you would agree with me, Madam Chair, and I think all members of the House will. This amendment will allow the Assembly to bring this act into effect in a timely manner, and it will avoid the avalanche of reporting errors that will punish volunteers and make the work of Elections Alberta unreasonable going forward.

I would submit again, Madam Chair, that it is a completely reasonable amendment designed to simplify the process and to make the dates line up and be more appropriate for the people involved.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment because of the simple fact that it simplifies things and clarifies matters as well. It is something that would reduce the burden on volunteers, which has been a theme for this afternoon's debate. It is something, I think, that is absolutely merited. I would

really hope that the hon. minister would genuinely and truly consider accepting this amendment because I believe it does improve the bill, adds consistency, and makes life easier for those dedicated volunteers that run our constituency associations and our parties.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for putting forward this amendment. I am in agreement that this amendment, which will make sure that the third-party components of the bill come into effect on the day that the Fair Elections Financing Act received first reading, is a good amendment. It brings this in line with other areas of the act that are brought in line on the day of first reading and I think contributes to what we are trying to do with this bill, which is encourage fair participation and transparency in the democratic process, because making sure that we have a transparent and level playing field for all parties and candidates are the goals of this act.

I appreciate the amendment put forth by the hon. member from the Wildrose. That will contribute to and support making sure that we are moving forward with a fair, democratic, and modern electoral system. I support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:37 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Horne	Miller
Carlier	Hunter	Nixon
Carson	Kazim	Phillips
Clark	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Connolly	Larivee	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rodney
Cortes-Vargas	Loewen	Rosendahl
Cyr	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Starke
Feehan	McIver	Stier
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Sucha
Goehring	McLean	Sweet
Gray	McPherson	Westhead
Hinkley		

5:40

Totals: For – 46 Against – 0

[Motion on amendment A3 carried unanimously]

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Chair, thank you for recognizing me. I'm following up on some conversation that occurred last evening. It's interesting because it involves the Member for Edmonton-Centre, who rose under section 29(2)(a) after the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow spoke, and it had to do with clarifying a position of how his constituency association operated compared to what the Member for Calgary-Elbow was speaking about.

It was interesting because the hon. member stated – and I'm quoting here from *Hansard*, page 2356 – that

in terms of how we operate our accounts, the Edmonton-Centre NDP Constituency Association operates its own bank account. I regularly accept contributions from people who want to support our constituency association. We take in money from fundraising events for our constituency association. We choose to process those payments through the central party, who then remits back to us the portion of it which we retain for our constituency association and keep in our own bank account.

To be clear, the constituency association operates independently.

There was some additional discussion to that. It was very interesting.

You know, I said, "Well, my goodness, we should take a look at that," so I did. For the period from December 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, according to the documents filed with the Chief Electoral Officer at Elections Alberta, the Edmonton-Centre New Democratic Party Constituency Association, in point of fact, received zero contributions. Zero. The fundraising of the Edmonton-Centre constituency association was also zero. I should say that there was reported \$2.42 in other income.

**Mr. Rodney:** Sorry. Does that stand for thousands?

**Dr. Starke:** No; \$2.42.

The member also mentioned about, you know, processing and transferring funds back and forth, but it's puzzling because there were zero funds transferred to the central party.

You know, I also looked at the period from January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, to see the contributions that had been taken in that were described by the hon. member. In fact, the grand total for that calendar year was zero. I then looked for the period January 1, 2016, to September 30, 2016, and I found that that was also zero.

So I said: well, you know, let's maybe take a look at the financial statements, the reporting for the Alberta New Democratic Party for the calendar year January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, and let's look at fundraising functions. The hon. member described fundraising functions, and I said: well, if they're processed through the central party, then it'll show up in that record. The total fundraising functions for the Alberta New Democratic Party for the period January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015 – the total amount that was raised from all fundraising functions – was zero.

You know, I'm certainly puzzled, Madam Chair, at how the financial recording and the financial reporting to the Chief Electoral Officer and the statements of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre that were made last night in reference to comments made by the Member for Calgary-Elbow could jibe. Certainly, some of what the hon. member described doesn't seem to really correspond to what's been reported to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Madam Chair, I guess the point that I'm making here is that, yes, there are different ways that different parties operate. It is most disconcerting to me as a member who respects how different political parties operate, because there are, certainly, differences, that the current legislation is very clearly, in my view, being brought forward in such a way that it favours the operational model that exists within the Alberta New Democratic Party, the governing party, the party that currently has a majority in our Legislature. To

have rules brought in that are very clearly in support of the model that is there and then to have an hon. member indicate here in the Assembly that, “Oh, no, no, no; it’s different” and “Oh, no, no; we do fundraising at the constituency level” and “Oh, no, no; you know, the fundraising goes through the central party” and then to in fact have that information not be corroborated by the official reporting that has been submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer is troubling.

Now, Madam Chair, I want to say directly that I have a great deal of respect for the Member for Edmonton-Centre. He works very hard for his constituents. We’ve had many conversations on a number of subjects. We don’t always necessarily agree . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Sharp dresser.

**Dr. Starke:** He’s a sharp dresser.

We don’t always agree on a lot of policy matters. I’m not doing this, Madam Chair, in any way to try to impugn his reputation, but I certainly would appreciate somebody providing some clarification as to how the comments that were made under 29(2)(a) last night, which, certainly, from what I am reading and unless I’m misinterpreting things – what I am reading here and what has in fact been reported to the Chief Electoral Officer I think most people would agree are quite different.

Now, if there has perhaps been an error made and these reports have to be amended in some ways to reflect what is actually happening and what was actually described by the hon. member, then, you know, by all means, that should be done. Errors can be made. But I’m in fact concerned that, you know, there’s some issue or some other problem.

Now, earlier in debate this afternoon I pointed out how a single person is the CFO, chief financial officer, for 36 different NDP constituency associations. Fortunately, for that individual, who would otherwise be a very, very busy person, the amount of financial transactions that he has to keep track of is relatively small. That’s certainly good because the workload that he would be undertaking would, I would suggest – you know, I think of the CFO in my constituency association. It’s a big job, and I’m very fortunate to have someone who is a former bank manager to do that job. Someone who is a chief financial officer for a major oil company in Lloydminster does that job for me.

You know, different political parties operate in different ways. I think the one thing that we need to be cognizant of because I think it is going to come up as we continue to debate this particular issue is that the rules that are set out need to be able to accommodate the different approaches of different political parties in our province. At the time that we were in government, had we introduced rules that were specifically punitive to the way the New Democratic Party operates its system within its party, I would tell you that we would be rightly called out for that. That would be fundamentally unfair to do that. Yet now that we have, you know, sort of a turnaround and the shoe on the other foot, we see a government that is putting through legislation that is, very clearly, punitive to parties that operate with a constituency association structure, and that, to me, is most disturbing.

5:50

Throughout the discussions that we had over the course of the summer at our committee, we pointed out some of those differences and, in some cases, why those were punitive to parties that had a different structure and a different function. In some cases those arguments were accepted and were thought about by the members on the committee, and I appreciated those thoughts. And I appreciated the fact that minds were changed. You know, that happened

more than a couple of times during the course of the committee because in a committee structure we were able to have these kinds of discussions as to how different parties work. We learned a little bit about, you know, some of the different things that we do within our own constituency associations right across the board, and it was very instructive.

But I for one am most concerned with the direction these amendments are headed. In many cases these amendments are being turned down, with the exception of the last one, which is good. But the fact that amendments that are very specifically designed to repair inequities that have been brought as a result of this legislation, amendments that are designed to correct a situation where the committee’s recommendations have been ignored by the legislation as it now sits, I can tell you, is profoundly disappointing.

I think it is profoundly troubling that the committee did good work – and all members of the committee I think put in a great deal of effort into the committee’s tasks that we had – and that work is summarily being swept aside by someone in the minister’s office, perhaps the minister herself. I don’t know. That’s troubling to me, and that makes me question what the benefit or what the use of having the committee was in the first place.

You know, I think, as has been pointed out by other members, that we did excellent work on the whistle-blower protection act. I think that once those recommendations are brought forward in terms of amendments to the legislation, they will strengthen the whistle-blower protection act, and that is a good thing. I think that’s part of the job that the committee was tasked to do. I guess we don’t know yet, because we haven’t seen them, what those amendments will be, but I’m certainly hopeful and optimistic that when those amendments come to the House, we will see a reflection of the recommendations that came from the members of the committee.

I’m puzzled and very concerned about the number of recommendations that went from the committee – in some cases they were unanimous; in some cases it was a split vote. Regardless, I’m concerned about the number of those recommendations that are different now that they come to the floor of the Assembly. That, to me, is something that’s troubling, and that, to me, is something that suggests a disregard for the effort of the multiple members that sat on that committee. So I’m certainly disappointed by that.

Madam Chair, I will tell you that I am concerned about the direction that this debate is headed. I know that there are a number of other issues that are still being reviewed by Parliamentary Counsel in terms of other amendments that are to be brought forward, and I’m looking forward to the opportunity to debate those amendments as well. But for now I wanted to make the comments and have them on the record indicating that I have grave concerns about the direction that this discussion is going and especially the direction in which the government has chosen to take this in terms of benefiting specifically the Alberta New Democratic Party’s methodology and the way that they operate as a political entity, which, as we’ve stated before, is quite different from the other parties in our province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 35. I wish to table copies of all

amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the report, does the Assembly concur?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to move that we adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]





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