



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 6, 2017

Day 49

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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

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Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (Ind)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
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Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
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Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
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Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
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Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 2 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Vacant: 1

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Kleinstauber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 6, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us take a moment to reflect. As today marks the beginning of Veterans' Week, may we take a moment to consider the remarkable service of women and men who so selflessly protect our great country. May we think of their spouses, their children, their families and friends for their own dedication and determination, from saying a difficult "See you soon" to exclaiming a most wonderful "Welcome home." We thank them and remember them.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome and be led in the singing of our national anthem by the Edmonton chapter of the Canadian Military Wives Choir.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.
Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Dach: Merci, M. le Président. C'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire 21 étudiants et étudiantes de l'école Our Lady of the Prairies. Les étudiants et étudiantes sont accompagnés par leurs enseignants M. Raphael Fortin et Mme Diaman Awaleh ainsi que par leur chaperon Mme Chelsi Reed, qui est aussi dans la Chambre. Veuillez vous lever, s'il-vous-plaît, et recevoir la bienvenue chaleureuse de l'Assemblée.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly participants in the Children's Services and Community and Social Services indigenous leadership program: from the Children's Services cultural knowledge and innovation branch Zachary Bliss, Kara Letain; from the Children's Services strategic policy branch Morgan Hrycak; from the Children's Services caregiver and permanency development branch Kassandra Landry; from the Community and Social Services workforce and career planning branch Chris Nadeau; and from Community and Social Services, Alberta's Promise Secretariat, Kateri Jones.

These interns are joined today by staff from both ministries who work to support the internship program, including Adison Wiberg from Alberta's Promise Secretariat, Thomas Woodburn from caregiver and permanency development, and Maria Drueco from human resources.

I would like to congratulate all of the interns on joining the program and on behalf of all of us here wish them the best of luck. I really look forward to seeing your contributions. I would ask them all to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Edmonton chapter of the Military Wives Choir. All members of the choir are partners of current or former service members, and some are active members themselves. In September members of the choir joined other choir sisters from across the country to perform at the opening ceremonies of the Invictus Games. Here today are Randall Thacker, Deborah and Florence Mullan, Debra Poley, Katherine Jackson, Lucinda Johnston, Sherrin Seguin. I thank the choir for their service and ask them now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if my guests have made it into the Chamber yet or not, but I will perhaps wait, if you don't mind, with your indulgence, till later on.

Thank you, sir.

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

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a real pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the North Edmonton Senior Citizens Recreation Society. The society enables community elders to become more engaged citizens of Canada by removing barriers of isolation. They provide an excellent venue for learning, entertainment, and group activities, assisted by volunteers, in a safe and secure environment. Earlier this year I was given the blessing and honour of becoming an honorary member of this group. Joining us today are Harnek Matharoo, Majer Singh Dhillon, Jagdish Singh Rai, Jagroop Singh Sidhu, Dalbara Singh Dhaliwal. I would now ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A great honour for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to the House the very dynamic and progressive Council of Alberta University Students, or CAUS. CAUS represents over a hundred thousand undergraduate students from the universities of Alberta, Calgary, Lethbridge, Mount Royal, and MacEwan. They're here in Edmonton this week for their annual fall advocacy days and counterpart conference, meeting with MLAs and their staff to advocate on issues important to postsecondary students and our future. I'd ask each to rise as I name them: Ilya Ushakov, Shane Scott, Robyn Paches, Royal Adkin, Amit Kumar, Daan Smit, Tina Miller, Hilary Jahelka, Ryan Wallace, Madelaine McCracken, Cordelia Snowdon, Sebastian Bergeron, Whitney Hunter, and Josh McKeown. Let's give them our warm welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism, I understand you have two introductions.

Miranda: That's right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some of my long-time friends and valuable members of the Calgary-Cross community here with us today, and I request that they rise as I call their names: Suzanne de Courville Nicol and Robert McPhee, known for their work in *Hello-Bonjour Calgary*, a popular bilingual talk show here in Canada; Wayne Garner and Alan Porter from the General Teamsters, local union No. 362; and Ken LaPointe, recipient of the Governor General's 2017 sovereign's medal for volunteer work in Rouleauville – Calgary's French Connection. I ask my colleagues to give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you a number of individuals from the Pakistani Canadian Cultural Association in Calgary who are here today for Eid celebrations. Joining us today are Tanveer Taj, Asjad Bukhari, Sardar Junaid, Javaria Masood, Asif Anwar, Umair Ahad, Sadat Choudhry, Ishrat Anees, Moin Mohammad, Imtiaz Ahmed. I ask them to please receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome to all of you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly a number of individuals who are joining us for today's Eid celebrations and who are also constituents of Calgary-Bow. Today I am pleased to welcome Ahmer Memon and Farida Memon from the Sindhi Association of North America. This group seeks to unite Sindhis to foster friendship and understanding between Sindhis and other nationalities and educate people about Sindhi philosophy, values, language, and literature. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Drever: Mr. Speaker, I have an additional introduction. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members here Mashhood Qazi from the Live for Humanity Foundation and who is also the vice-president of my constituency association. The Live for Humanity Foundation is focused on economic independence and empowerment for fellow Albertans. They provide professional guidance through advocacy and education and help people cope with various adverse domestic situations. I'd like to ask him to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives of the Syrian Refugee Support Group. Saima Jamal and Sam Nammoura are cofounders of the group, which welcomes new Canadians and helps them settle into their new lives. Today with them are two Syrian newcomer business entrepreneurs, Mr. Abdul Fatah Sabouni and Mr. Walid Balsha. Mr. Sabouni is a third-generation soap maker who had a very successful soap factory in Aleppo. After the war Mr. Sabouni had to leave everything behind. Fortunately for us, he brought his knowledge of the soap-making trade and his business acumen to Calgary. His soaps are now very popular with Calgarians. Together with his business partner, Mr. Balsha, they are a shining success story of Syrian newcomers bringing new business to our communities. I ask Saima, Sam,

Abdul Fatah, and Walid all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the president and CEO of the Alberta Forest Products Association and also the director of communications for the association. The AFPA is an important partner of our government in keeping our forest industry strong as we continue the work of diversifying our economy and as we face market challenges along the way. They are here today to witness the introduction of Bill 25, which will strengthen our foresters' commitment to the professional management of forests in Alberta in a way that supports our economy. I would like to ask Paul Whittaker, CEO and president of the AFPA, and Brock Mulligan, director of communications, to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you 11 individuals joining us on behalf of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Calgary for today's Eid celebration. This group seeks to educate the world about Islam, to promote understanding between people of different religions, and to bring harmony among people. Joining us today are Mohyuddin Mirza, Jawad Virk, Kashif Sohail, Mashhood Chaudhry, Tanweer Ahmed, Nasir Mahmood Butt, Khalid Choudry, Rafiq Mohammad, Mubashir Ahmed, Mubashir Khalid, Daud Ahmad. I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence, I do have three sets of introductions. First, I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly executive members of the Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals. We have here today executive director Wendy Graden as well as joint council members Colin Hanusz and Andy Shandro. In 2015 the college of Alberta Professional Foresters and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists came together to form one stronger voice under the name of the Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals, 1,600 forest management professionals who ensure that Albertans benefit from healthy, sustainable forests. They are here today to see the introduction of Bill 25, which supports this merger. Thank you very much to our guests for everything they do to advocate for their members. I'd now ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to introduce to you and through to all members of this Assembly guests who are joining us for today's Eid celebration. Today I'm pleased to welcome Eyup Ozturk and Yesim Ozturk from the Intercultural Dialogue Institute. They seek to promote respect and mutual understanding among people of all cultures and faiths through partnership with other communities, cultural, religious, and interreligious organizations. By sharing the differences and similarities in culture, they hope to achieve global peace. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members Muhammad Umar Qasim from the Islamic Circle of North America. ICNA Calgary works to establish community centres and places of worship for Muslims and offers educational and training opportunities to increase knowledge of Islam and its members. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome to all of you.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have three sets of introductions, but I will try to be as brief as possible. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Zahra Somani, one of Edmonton's many successful business leaders. Zahra has also served as chair of the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and is currently serving as president of His Highness the Aga Khan's Ismaili Council for Edmonton. She's also a member of the board of governors at the University of Alberta and serves on the mayor's task force to end poverty. She was also one of the speakers at today's event. I'd ask Zahra to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

My second guest was also a speaker at the event today, Tariq Hussain. He's joined by his friend Ahmad as well. Tariq is on the Muslim Council of Calgary board, which is an elected body that provides leadership and guidance to Muslims within Calgary. I'd ask both Tariq and Ahmad to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

Mr. Speaker, this is my last set of introductions. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you a number of my other distinguished guests who were part of today's event. They are Shaukat Hayat, Sana Jahangir, Shan Ali, Dr. Moiz Ramji, Arif Karmali, Sameer Thawer, Mohib Samnani. I thank each and every one of them for joining us here today and for their contribution to their communities. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise here to introduce to you and through you today my guests who are here celebrating Eid-al-Adha: Mr. Mahamad Accord, Mr. Abdi Warsame, Mr. Abdirahman Abdullahi, Ms Habiba Abdulle, Mr. Mohamed Hersi, joined by Kerry Cundal. They were present today for the celebrations. I wish you [remarks in Arabic].

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some guests who are joining us for the Eid celebration from the Bangladesh Canada Association of Calgary. Today I'm pleased to welcome Kazi Ahasan, Mohammad Roshid, Khair Khandaker, Asif Iqbal. The BCAOC seeks to promote and preserve the history, culture, and traditions of Bangladesh in Canada and foster a better understanding between Bangladeshi and Canadians in general. I'd ask them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:50

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sabeen Vasti, who has joined us for our Eid celebration. Sabeen is here on behalf of the Bab Ul Hawajj Islamic Centre of Calgary. The centre represents Shia Asna Ashrees in Calgary, with the goal of providing an opportunity for anyone to learn and practise Islam regardless of age or background. The centre was formed in 2014 by a handful of people but today has close to 600 members. I'd ask them to rise, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Oral Question Period

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Opposition

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend was the convention for the B.C. branch of the NDP. I imagine the Premier might have attended a few of those back in the day when she was an NDP staffer in B.C. The Premier's counterpart, John Horgan, was again with glee touting his goal of blocking the Trans Mountain pipeline. Apparently, the NDP in B.C. haven't got the message that Alberta now has so-called social licence. To the Premier: have you raised the spectre of potential consequences with your B.C. counterpart should they illegally block the Trans Mountain pipeline, and if so, what are those consequences?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have been very clear in our position all along that we believe the position of the B.C. NDP is incorrect, is wrong, is bad for Alberta, is bad for British Columbians, is bad for all Canadians. We have made that position very clear over and over and over again, and we will continue to do it. The fact of the matter is, however, that the work that this government has done on climate change, on working with our energy industry did something that those guys over there were never able to do. We got a pipeline approved by the federal government.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, Albertans don't want words on this. They want the Premier to do something. What consequences will she use? Last week we asked the Premier if she would be travelling to B.C. in the new year to make the case for Trans Mountain and Alberta's ethical oil. Today we learned that the Premier is set to speak in B.C. on November 30 at the Vancouver board of trade. So to the Premier: will you use this opportunity to send a message to John Horgan as well as to the mayors of Vancouver and Burnaby that would include potential consequences if they block the Trans Mountain pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the member opposite learned last week that I was going to B.C. because, I believe, I indicated that to him in answer to a question. Nonetheless, what we will continue to do is that we will focus on talking with all interested parties and particularly the people of B.C., talk about how this is a good thing for B.C., for Alberta, and for Canada. Moreover, what we will do is that we will continue to do the work that we can do in the appropriate forums to advocate for Alberta's position, for Kinder Morgan's position. We will do

that because we will then support the decision that has been made, which is that the pipeline is approved.

Mr. Nixon: So no consequences. Just words again from this Premier, and no action on behalf of Albertans.

The new federal NDP leader has made his ideological opposition to pipelines crystal clear. The Premier has tried to dismiss her federal counterpart's opposition. However, Mr. Speaker, section 1.02 of the Alberta NDP constitution clearly states: "The Party shall constitute a section of the New Democratic Party of Canada." So they are the same party. Has the Premier spoken to her federal leader and informed him that he is wrong on his position on pipelines?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. The answer to that question is absolutely yes. I have told Mr. Singh that he is wrong. He is dead wrong. But just as important, he is irrelevant. And the reason he is irrelevant is because the decision has already been taken by the federal government. But you know what? I know that the UCP over there is gleefully predicting that the pipeline will fail. They are cackling, praying that it won't be built. But for Albertans this issue is bigger than partisan politics. I get that, and I think it's about time that they do, too.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Carbon Levy and Fuel Costs

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, winter is here, and I hope everyone is staying warm. Unfortunately, the NDP is making that harder for Albertans. In just under two months' time Albertans will be dealing with a whopping 75 per cent tax on natural gas in the middle of winter when heating is needed the most. Does anyone remember the NDP promising a 75 per cent tax on home heating in the last election? Of course not, because the NDP hid this part of their agenda from Albertans when they were campaigning. Will the NDP reconsider this draconian, cruel tax on home heating and bring in common-sense change?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what we have been focused on doing in this government is, first of all, moving forward on a responsible climate change plan that ensures that we make progress on this important issue while at the same time being sure that we provide rebates to low- and middle-income families that cover the costs that might increase as a result of the climate change plan. That's what we've done. That is alongside a number of other things that this government has done to make life more affordable.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing to see a government defend a 75 per cent tax on an item that is essential for most Albertans just to live, and remember that the Trudeau-NDP carbon tax will only go in one direction, up. Can the Premier tell us what other items the NDP believes should be subject to a massive 75 per cent tax? Clearly, we need to ask today since this secretive NDP government will not voluntarily disclose their ideological agenda to Albertans while they're campaigning.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the climate leadership plan is actually working. It's reducing

emissions. It's diversifying our economy. It's creating good jobs. I don't know; the member opposite might not have heard this, but it also ensured that we got not one but two pipelines approved, doing all that while tackling – tackling – the serious issue of climate change that, quite frankly, is long overdue for attention by someone that believes in science. I'm proud to be the one that's doing that.

Mr. Nixon: I count only cancelled pipelines under this NDP government.

It's not just the price of natural gas that is going up. Gasoline and diesel are also set for a 50 per cent tax hike as of January 1. When we are already seeing some of the biggest spikes at the pump, another tax hike is definitely not welcome by Albertans. But let's not forget the Premier's advice to Albertans last winter. She told Albertans to walk or to take a bus. Before that, she told Albertans that were already hurting because of her policies just to buy a new car. Will the Premier acknowledge that taking a bus, walking, or other options like that are just not options for all Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Our government is building Alberta, and we're doing it by reinvesting the money from the climate leadership plan in critical projects that not only build Alberta but make life better for Albertans like, for instance, the \$1.6 billion investment in the green line in Calgary. I'd like the members opposite to come clean on what they would do on that project if they cancelled the carbon levy because – you know what? – the money isn't there, and the disingenuous statements that their leader has been making over the last two or three days are ridiculous. You either support the green line or you don't. You either support the climate change plan or you don't, and we know where they stand.

The Speaker: Third main question

Provincial By-election

Mr. Nixon: Last week we asked why the government wasn't demanding that the NEB intervene to stop the city of Burnaby's obstruction of the Trans Mountain pipeline, and the government followed our advice. We lead; they follow. We asked when the Premier would head to other provinces to promote Alberta's energy, and today we see an announcement that she is doing exactly that. We lead; they follow. It is clear that the Hon. Jason Kenney is getting results, and he's not even in this House yet. To the Premier: when will she request a by-election so that the Hon. Jason Kenney can join us here as the Leader of the Official Opposition and keep leading so that you can follow?

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that it might be of some use to the opposition for them to brush up on their fairy-tale telling because that was quite the revisionist history that I just heard there. Nonetheless, we will move forward in due course with respect to calling a by-election. As the member knows, the legislation gives us six months. I doubt that it will take that long. We will certainly move forward as soon as we can, and we look forward to having those debates subsequently. Let me be clear that our government moved forward on the Burnaby matter well before anyone over there ever raised it, and our plan to go . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: No, Premier, Jason Kenney is not a fairy tale. He's the real deal. Let's get him here in this House.

Last week the Premier's office told the media that a by-election would be called without undue delay. She just said the same to this

House right now, Mr. Speaker. The seat for Calgary-Lougheed sits empty. When will the Premier call a by-election and get the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition here in the House?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as I said, again, we will call the by-election in due course. I don't believe that the seat has actually been vacant for even a week yet. It's important to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate fully in that by-election. We don't actually go by the schedule of the UCP. We go by the schedule that's best for Albertans, and we will do that.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we know the NDP like to talk about the Hon. Jason Kenney over and over. I suspect that actually last week his name was mentioned more in this House in one week than probably any other person in history. They repeatedly talk about him. They clearly are nervous about him. It's clear that they're eager to debate him. So why won't the Premier do the right thing, call a by-election immediately, and get Jason Kenney here in the House? Is she nervous?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me be absolutely – absolutely – completely clear on this matter. Not only am I not nervous; I can't wait. That being said, as I've said already twice, it will be called in due course.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

School Construction

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Southwest Edmonton is full of young families and children that are attending the eight new schools our government has built and opened since the last election. However, the old schools built by the former government under their risky and failed P3 model have long lists of deficiencies, including fields that students can't play on. What is the government doing to ensure that schools are equipped for our children to perform their best?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much for the question. Certainly, we have learned a lot about building schools because – you know what? – we are in the largest infrastructure build of schools in the history of the province. It's going very well. We learned from the past and from the opposite members that the P3 model was certainly deficient. Certainly, I work with school boards and their lists to make determinations of where they need schools next. I'm happy to be doing that. You know, we've, as it happens, built quite a few schools in Edmonton-South West in the last number of years, and we will continue to do so.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our new schools often open completely full or nearly full, so these schools have a greater enrolment than expected. What is the government doing, what is the minister doing to ensure that we will have enough funding and teachers for every single student?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this government took office, we have funded for enrolment in education from kindergarten

to grade 12. We know that is important, and we can see that our enrolment continues to grow. It's a sign of a healthy economy. It's a sign of optimism for the future. Certainly, you cannot undercut the dreams of all of those young families by making massive cuts as Jason Kenney and the UCP would do.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now those students and families in my riding that are filling those schools are starting to grow up. When will the minister commit to building a high school in my constituency to support those growing communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that with all of the young families in suburban cities around the province, of course, they will end up needing to go to high school as well. You know, after many, many years we are building those schools that are needed to be built. It's a good investment in the future, and it's a good investment in our economy as well because, of course, when you see a healthy education system, then families can settle in, companies can move to Alberta, and we will all continue to prosper here in this fine province.

Thank you.

Pipeline Approval

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government recently declared war on Alberta and our energy sector when he stated during the NEB reviews that upstream emissions linked to the projects under review would be assessed. What this means for Alberta is that the federal government will be in direct contravention of the Canadian Constitution by meddling in provincial jurisdiction. We hear crickets on this issue from this government while hundreds of thousands of Albertans continue to look for work that could be created by the pipeline approval. Will the Premier finally commit to standing up for Albertans and our province, or is she happy to be Ottawa's pawn?

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the oil and gas industry wants certainty, and that's what our government is giving them. Jason Kenney's Conservatives are only causing more uncertainty with their reckless and ideological promises. We've had two pipelines approved in two years. On that side of the House you have a couple of former Conservative cabinet ministers who didn't manage to get anything done in 10.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that blocking pipelines through overregulation is a direct contradiction of Canada's goal to achieve emissions reductions at the lowest cost to the economy and given that the Premier's Ottawa Liberal friends continue to control Alberta's environmental policy despite the fact that upstream emissions are clearly under provincial purview, is the Premier afraid to stand up for Albertans, or is she more afraid to admit her theory that staying in the good books of Justin Trudeau has failed to serve Alberta in any way, in any shape, in any form?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this government has taken action on oil sands emissions through the implementation of a limit. We're the only energy-producing jurisdiction in the world with such a limit, and we have worked on

that with the oil companies themselves. That is the kind of action that we have taken in addition to advising the NEB of our intent to participate fully to support Kinder Morgan in its dispute with Burnaby. On every possible front this government, this side of the House, is defending Alberta's oil and gas interests and putting people back to work while we do it.

Mrs. Pitt: That's not what the rest of Alberta thinks, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the federal government had previously committed to deferring to the provincial governments in its effort to curb emissions and given that it is unlikely that the NEB will be able to approve any pipelines if upstream and downstream emissions are factored into an already overregulated process, how much longer will the Premier allow her NDP government to be a puppet for Justin Trudeau at the expense of everyday Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, reckless rhetoric is not going to get these pipelines built any faster. Neither, too, is conservative cheerleading for those pipelines' demise. Jason Kenney's risky plan will only cause uncertainty. It is our plan that has put in place the certainty, that has taken the environment and the economy seriously and ensured that we can move this province forward, put people back to work, and make life better for all Albertans.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Opposition (continued)

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project has run into the red tape of Burnaby, where the mayor and bureaucrats complain of being too busy and needing more time for reviews with no end in sight. The delays are costing Kinder Morgan about \$35 million a month plus an additional \$90 million in lost revenue for every single month of delay. By wasting Kinder Morgan's money, is the NDP trying to kill \$7.4 billion in private investment and thousands of jobs?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's the conservative side of the House that would like nothing more than for this pipeline to fail. They've got their pompoms out. They are ready to cheer for Alberta's demise. You know what? We are focused on making life better for Albertans, fighting every day for good jobs for our energy industry by ensuring that our voice is heard at the National Energy Board with respect to the Trans Mountain pipeline. We are the ones who are making life better for Albertans.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that I have been to the Westridge marine terminal in Burnaby where the Trans Mountain pipeline terminates and given that the facility is a tiny footprint hidden among the trees and park space with only three tanks and a jetty to load boats, what has the Minister of Energy done to knock some common sense into the mayor of Burnaby to stop delaying permits for a project deemed to be a national interest by the National Energy Board?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This kind of violent language is completely inappropriate and just completely unnecessary. One jurisdiction does not have the right to obstruct a project of national importance. We've been clear as a government

on this matter. The city of Burnaby is overreaching, and we have been very clear at both the National Energy Board level, with the Premier of British Columbia, with the federal leader of the NDP inasmuch as that matters – we have been clear – from the very beginning that this pipeline is in Alberta's interest, it's in Canada's national interest, and it will get built.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I too find that words like “knocking on the head” are not advisable in this House. I heard earlier use of the word “war.” Can we just please use different language than refers to violence?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that Telus has its headquarters in Vancouver and major offices in Burnaby, B.C., and since Burnaby is no longer a business-friendly town and given the ample empty office space in downtown Calgary and given that the Premier is going to be in B.C. soon, will she meet the Telus CEO and entice them to relocate their operations and head office to a business-friendly city like Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we are focused on the two pipelines that we have gotten approved while Jason Kenney and the Conservatives are focused on themselves and their political interests. While we've been busy fighting to get two pipelines built, Jason Kenney is making reckless promises that would only mean more blocked pipelines. Our climate leadership plan got this done in two years; Jason Kenney sat in Ottawa for two decades and did nothing to move this matter forward.

Access to Information

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government continues to deny that it is the most secretive government in Alberta's history. The Official Opposition and the Privacy Commissioner have called this government out on many occasions, and now so is a group representing over 800 media sources. A new audit shows that access to information under the NDP has sunk to an all-time new low. To the Minister of Service Alberta: will you stop using recycled talking points and admit that access to information has deteriorated under your watch?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we believe that government should be open and transparent, and that's why when we took office, we got to work. We got to work ensuring that we can improve turnaround times, which we have done, for FOIP requests. We are proactively sharing more information with the Alberta public than any government in the history of Alberta ever has before. We will continue to work on this, we will continue to improve culture, and I think that we are certainly the ones to look to for appreciation of transparency.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that access to information has deteriorated under this government and given that this deterioration can be seen in processing and completion time, amount of records disclosed, and fee assessments and given the fact that this government also likes to talk about its supposed successes, to the Minister of Service Alberta: are you and your colleagues proud of being at the bottom of all levels of the government in the country with a D grade? A D grade.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret in this House that when we took government, we adopted 44 years of not caring about transparency and, in fact, a government that enjoyed being secretive. In fact, those attitudes still very much exist on the other side of the floor. When we look at the Leader of the Opposition, we need look no further than Mr. Kenney, who will not even disclose his campaign contributors. His plan for extreme social conservatism he has continued to keep secret, and he will not be forthright with the . . .

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that the government has brought in new levels of secrecy related to FOIP and given the fact that this government is being investigated for deleting e-mails and given that we have had scandals like this in B.C., Ontario, and the United States resulting in dismissals, criminal charges, and lost elections, to the minister: are you actually going to make positive changes to your department, or will you continue to promote further secrecy by maintaining the status quo? It is shameful.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really wish my friend on the opposition side would actually take knowledge of the fact that we have hired more people to clear the backlog, that we are streamlining FOIP processes, that we are proactively disclosing more information than the government of Alberta ever has. In addition to all of this, we have posted online all sole-source contracts over \$10,000, we have opened up the ABC appointment process, and we have posted all salaries and contracts of all the Premier's and ministers' staff. We are working hard. There is more work to do, but the opposition is no one to be stating anything on this issue when they enjoy the secrecy surrounding their leader.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Infertility Treatment Funding

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Friday Alberta Health Services confirmed that the province's only publicly operated fertility clinic will stop offering noninsured services such as in vitro fertilization in February. This impacts people across the province who want to grow their families and need support to do so. Services that help to find the cause of infertility are covered by the province, but procedures that attempt to find solutions are not. To the Minister of Health: why are there not more supports for families struggling with infertility in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for this important question. We know how difficult it can be for families who are trying to conceive when they are unable to do so. That's one of the reasons why the space that will be created through the movement will focus on the insured services, just like counselling for families who are struggling with infertility and other publicly funded services that the member mentioned. In terms of the services that aren't under the formulary and aren't publicly funded, they will still be available in the city of Edmonton. We are absolutely working to address the wait time and using the space to make sure that the publicly funded services have less wait.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. Given that existing patients must complete treatments by February or transition to other clinics and given that many wait-listed clients are still weeks or months away from their appointments and given that average wait times can vary between seven and 18 months depending on the clinic, what is the Minister of Health doing to ensure that those already seeking treatment within the system do not have further delays due to the decision to end these services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know it's extremely challenging to recruit for these positions, and I am being assured that the staff who are working with these patients will continue to do so and provide as many opportunities for them to receive the care in a timely fashion, particularly those that have already undertaken the treatments that they are a part of. Again, my heart goes out to anyone who's been impacted by this. I've worked to make sure that there will be a smooth transition for employees because that is also something that we want to ensure, that they continue to have opportunities to provide care and work and that the insured services that are available continue to be provided through Alberta Health Services.

Ms McPherson: Given that in February 2014 the Assisted Reproductive Technologies final report commissioned by the former government suggested that public funding for ARTs could see significant health care and societal cost savings over the long term and given that other provinces have a variety of options available, including unique funding models and tax credits, again to the Minister of Health: why is your government creating barriers for families struggling with infertility rather than supports?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the member could not be further from the truth if she tried. We are absolutely moving forward to expand access to publicly funded services, we are making sure that we're supporting families, and we are standing up for and protecting public health care in this province, as opposed to what members of the opposition are proposing, which is 20 per cent cuts. Jason Kenney talks about a 20 per cent cut. We know what that would do to public health care, and we know what it would do to these families. Instead, we're supporting them, and the staff are continuing to provide important services under a public model where it's publicly available.

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

2:20 '60s Scoop in Alberta

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, talk about Team Angry. While many people focus on the hurt and trauma caused by the residential school system, another program known as the '60s scoop resulted in the forced removal of indigenous children from their parents, resulting in the breakdown of the family unit, a loss of indigenous culture and languages, and a lost generation of people. I've asked before, and I'll ask again: Premier, will you issue an official apology on behalf of the government of Alberta for the actions undertaken by that government in what is known as the '60s scoop?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As the member is well aware, we've been working very carefully with the '60s scoop society on exactly what we promised, and that is a meaningful and sincere apology that incorporates people who had experienced this particular activity helping us to design an apology and a process leading to that apology that actually reflects a deep desire for change.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many survivors of the '60s scoop have difficulty applying for government documents outlining their removal from their parents on-reserve, have lost their language, their culture, identity, family, and grew a sense of shame towards their race, heritage, and traditional ceremonies, will the Premier admit that the '60s scoop was a poorly implemented, discriminatory policy that should not have been supported by our province? When can we expect an actual apology?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the question. Our government indeed stands with survivors and their families, and we're working very closely with the members of the '60s scoop society in order to effect an effective apology. The apology is coming forward, but we have agreed that our work with the community would be based on a sincere attempt to understand the experience and to apologize appropriately. Therefore, we've been working on a time schedule that's been not only agreed to by the members of the society, but they've asked for extensions, and we are providing that to them.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the province of Manitoba has been the only jurisdiction to issue an apology for the '60s scoop and given that this past summer the federal government finally officially recognized the '60s scoop survivors, when will the Premier on behalf of the government of Alberta issue an apology for the government's role in wresting so many children away from their parents and loved ones in a botched policy? When?

Mr. Feehan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure what more I can say. We are working with the very people who are asking for the apology. We are working on their timeline. Perhaps the Official Opposition wants to just toss off an apology, considering that they were in government at the time, of all of these activities so that they can get it over with. We're not rushing it to cover up for your errors and your mistake. We are taking care of an appropriate apology by working carefully with the community involved. I wish you had done the same.

The Speaker: Point of order is noted.

Land-use Framework

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, when the land-use framework that is based on regional planning was first approved as government policy in 2008, a timeline was set for the implementation where seven regional plans were to have been completed by 2012. Now, unfortunately, 10 years after approval, according to the government website only two out of seven regional plans have been completed, and one more is only partway completed. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: why is the Land Use Secretariat division

taking so long to get these tasks accomplished, and when will they all be completed, please?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is quite right that land-use planning does take time. It is a good tool when used appropriately, when resourced appropriately, and that's why we're taking the time to get it right. The member is quite right that, of course, we have the lower Athabasca regional plan in place, the South Saskatchewan regional plan, and we're moving forward with the North Saskatchewan. These things do take time, and they take resources. You know what wouldn't help with that? Several billion dollars' worth of cuts.

Mr. Stier: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this delay in the regional plans is very problematic and given that the new Municipal Government Act bills that just recently passed now require all municipalities to do municipal development plans and intermunicipal collaboration frameworks and given that those MDPs and ICFs must be in agreement with the regional plans and given that only two out of seven regional plans have been completed, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how can municipalities possibly comply when there are no regional plans for their region?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the member is quite correct. In places where there's a regional plan in place, the municipal planning is done in accordance with that. The fact of the matter is that we inherited a situation, in particular with the lower Athabasca regional plan, that had a number of problems with it. It was subject to judicial review, and why? Because the Conservatives did not take the concerns of indigenous peoples anything approaching seriously. We have approached this problem in a thoughtful and balanced way, and we're going to move forward with those communities to make sure that they are meaningfully consulted and involved in this process.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, given that the land-use framework required the entire regional system to be completed in a timely fashion based upon the process that was in place 10 years ago and given that this NDP government has dragged their feet on this very important system and since getting into power has made it even more complicated by injecting dozens of new changes to the Municipal Government Act, to the Minister of Environment and Parks once again: with all of these changes to the system by Municipal Affairs, what now will be the timeline for the completion of the regional plans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we do have a review of the lower Athabasca regional plan under way right now. We have moved forward with a number of the different aspects of the South Saskatchewan regional plan, which were in fact unfinished business by the previous government, and we're moving forward with the North Saskatchewan regional plan as well. These things do take time. They take even more time if you're going to eviscerate the public service and cut to the bone the operations and the monitoring and the various aspects of the Environment and Parks budget, which is, of course, what the conservatives have put forward as something approaching thoughtful public policy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Municipal Governance and Finance

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been quite a busy summer this year outside of the Legislature with both MLAs and ministers spending a lot more time in communities across the province, particularly the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who I understand logged over 10,000 kilometres visiting municipalities, including a few in my constituency. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what concerns did you hear this summer about the implementation of the new MGA?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. Over the summer I did have the opportunity to travel quite a bit to 37 different communities across Alberta, from Bow Island to Hinton to Oyen to High Level. I saw it all, and I heard a lot, too. An overwhelming theme that continuously arose was the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. There are many examples across the province of collaboration, very good examples, but we don't want to leave it solely to ad hoc programs across the province and local initiatives. We want to have mandatory frameworks in place so that neighbouring municipalities work together and make sure that the dollars that they use, the taxpayer dollars, are . . .

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you. Given that municipal officials in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville expressed great appreciation for the government's crucial investments in critical infrastructure such as the highway 15 bridge twinning and given that previous governments created and ignored these deficits and ignored needs in rural Alberta and now have proposed cuts to both infrastructure and services, what assurance can you give to rural Alberta when it comes to prioritizing crucial infrastructure builds?

Mr. S. Anderson: Good question. Thank you. Our government is working collaboratively with our municipal partners along with our federal counterparts to leverage our capital dollars towards economic growth. We got a preview of the type of pain advertised by the opposition when the former Premier of Saskatchewan made the same cuts as these folks are proposing. Rural Saskatchewan fielded the brunt of the vast majority of these cuts, slashing their funds to transportation, libraries, and classrooms. It's imperative that we maintain these critical economic corridors that create good-paying jobs and grow local economies. We need to build up Alberta, not cut it down. [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member.
Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the opposition continues to tear down the importance of regional co-operation and our municipal stakeholders' efforts and successes, what did you hear this summer from communities about the MGA frameworks and how it helps municipalities work together and plan for growth?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Member, for the question. Despite the rhetoric coming from the opposition, municipalities, like Albertans, understand that a dollar goes a lot further through partnership. Albertans don't live their lives according to boundary lines on a map, and residents in different communities can often utilize the same services and the same infrastructure. Instead of duplicating these services that are very costly, municipalities need

to work together to deliver more effective and efficient services to their communities. That is why we have implemented these mandatory ICFs to ensure that Albertans are getting the best services and the best value for every tax dollar.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

2:30 Calgary LRT Green Line Funding

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To many people's surprise, the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills is telling his constituents that funding for the green line is, quote, being made available through the carbon tax, unquote. Why is that a surprise? Because the provincial funding was set aside long before this member was even in Calgary and the NDP was in government. To the Minister of Infrastructure: how do you plan to correct the information your caucus members are providing to Calgarians?

Ms Jansen: Well, I thank the member for the question. Ah, the green line, the plan the opposition loves to hate. [interjections] Jason Kenney doesn't want a green line. Jason Kenney doesn't want . . . [interjections] You know, Mr. Speaker, I know they don't want to hear from me, but to heckle through my entire answer is really exactly what I expect from them over there.

The Speaker: At least you guys are laughing. That's a good sign.
First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP members of the Legislature are providing the Calgary constituents with very misleading information and given that this project is such an important one that it is important to provide Albertans with the specific facts, to the Minister of Infrastructure: can you please tell Albertans the exact breakdown of funding for the ever-shrinking green line?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, Jason Kenney was happy to do a photo op when he wanted to get his picture in the paper, and that is when there was a theoretical plan. With an actual plan in place – the city of Calgary made that plan with residents of Calgary. This is the plan Calgarians want, the plan Calgarians are going to get, and it's because we respect the people of Calgary. Jason Kenney would make sure there would be no green line. That's a fact.

Mr. Gill: Given that out of the total \$4.6 billion of funding for the green line one-third is coming from each of the three levels of government and given that the original plan for the line was 46 kilometres and \$5.3 billion in funding and that now it's only 26 kilometres for the same price tag, to the Minister of Infrastructure again: if the original project was 46 kilometres without the carbon tax money, then why did it shrink to almost half with the carbon tax money? Can you please explain this math to Calgarians?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, Jason Kenney was interested in a theoretical plan. What the city of Calgary and Calgarians, through consultation, came up with was an actual plan. So if the member is interested in that, he might want to heed the words of our mayor, who said that it's a bit funny that members of the government who started this project without any studies are now criticizing the final plan, which was a result of consultation and studies. I know you don't like to hear it, but then you don't want to see a green line, and the rest of Calgary does.

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

Fentanyl Use Prevention and Treatment

Mr. Ellis: Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a great day in the fight against fentanyl and other illicit opioids. Last week Calgary police laid charges under legislation I introduced which banned possession of pill press machines. This is the first time that anyone has been charged under this legislation. I am proud to know that two pill presses and more than 1,000 fentanyl pills are now off the street. To the Minister of Justice: what tools has your department introduced to help law enforcement keep these deadly drugs off the streets?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as our policing partners have said and as we have said repeatedly, this is certainly a process that requires the involvement of police but also the recognition that people need to be able to seek treatment. I'm sure that my hon. colleagues from Health can speak to that as well. One of the most important things we did was that we stepped in and funded ALERT after Jason Kenney cut it.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that while my bill addresses one aspect of prevention, much more must be done in terms of intervention and, especially, education to save lives and to start to get a handle on what has certainly become a public health emergency here in Alberta, to the Associate Minister of Health: what are you doing specifically to educate Albertans on the extreme dangers of fentanyl?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We know that in the past there has definitely been a war-on-drugs mentality and that it hasn't worked. Instead of shaming Albertans, we're proud to work with them in a dignified way to ensure that they see their worth and that we're supporting them on the way. That's why we've distributed over 31,000 naloxone kits, we've brought thousands of new treatment spaces online, and we've brought supervised consumption services to Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. That's only the beginning.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that to date, as the minister mentioned, the NDP has chosen to focus the vast majority of resources allotted to address the opioid crisis on harm reduction strategies for addicts and given that naloxone kits and safe injection sites are not long-term solutions, to the same minister: when will you expand your scope to include more focus on addictions treatment, where long waits at facilities across the province are preventing so many Albertans from getting the help that they need?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We believe in the principle of harm reduction. We know that past governments have definitely wanted to deny Albertans these rights and these dignities. We think that people who use substances are still people and that they deserve to be protected.

I want to specifically thank the MLA for Calgary-McCall for his advocacy. The commission recommended supporting the Punjabi community health services addiction program expansion. We've

accepted this recommendation, and we're working with the community to ensure that their needs are met.

Smart Agrifood Supercluster Application

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the world is moving at an unprecedented pace of growth and innovation. The creation of superclusters fosters collaboration and partnership, with the goal of advancing Canada's role in the world as an innovation leader. Recently Olds College was selected as one of nine potential sites for investment in a supercluster and asked to submit a full application for its smart ag supercluster. The federal government is making \$950 million available for superclusters. To the minister: what kind of resources have you directed to Olds College in support of this application?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to member for the very important question. Without a doubt, agriculture is a fundamental part of Alberta's economy. It includes food processing, food service, and beverage industries. We're so pleased to support the smart agrifood supercluster application to the federal government's supercluster initiative. This supercluster initiative includes 50 firms representing industry, academia, growers, and government and includes the new CEO of Alberta Innovates, who's part of the steering committee. We're going to do whatever we can to support the federal government after they announce the short list to get this project where it deserves.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given the critical role of the ag sector and how it plays in our economy and given the opportunity for this supercluster to potentially make Alberta a world leader in smart agriculture and provide jobs for our province at a time when hundreds of thousands of Albertans are out of work and given that the government of Saskatchewan has already vocally supported their support for a supercluster in Saskatoon, will the minister of agriculture unreservedly offer his support, time, and attention to this very important project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. The smart agrifood supercluster is one of nine supercluster proposals across the country. If this particular proposal is shortlisted as one of those nine, that's great news. We'll continue to fully support the funding. The whole pocket of funding is \$950 million from the federal government. I, for one, and this government are always fond of taking money from the federal government to support very good initiatives such as this one, and without a doubt I will support this with all my worth.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that the goal of the smart ag supercluster is to harness science and technology to enhance environmental and economic sustainability and since the technologies that will be developed will assist the ag sector to continue to lead in the environment, will the minister of environment now commit fully to support this application and work closely with her counterparts to ensure that Olds College is successful in its application?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I have met with Olds College and with this particular group a couple of times. Certainly, we continue to support their application. I will point out that one of the reasons why

Alberta was shortlisted and this particular initiative was shortlisted is because we are showing leadership on issues related to climate change, climate adaptation, and that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. That's what strengthens this province. It certainly, as the Conservatives would have it, doesn't take that away.

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

2:40 Calgary Regional Partnership Transition

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary Regional Partnership, or the CRP, was formed 13 years ago. It is a collaborative network of 11 municipalities in the Calgary region that work together and ensure that growth occurs in a sustainable manner. At the moment regulations for the new growth board are being drafted, and eventually the new board may replace many of the services currently provided by the CRP. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what will happen to the CRP and the geographic information system or broadband initiatives after the funding extension expires on March 31, 2018?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The CRP was a voluntary partnership of municipalities in the Calgary region, that's done really good work. There is now a transition towards a new growth management board – that's for sure – and this mandatory growth management board will be the new regional growth entity in the Calgary region. We are going to support that board going forward, of course, and decisions that they make, and we want to make sure that the initiatives that they've begun are supported as well. In short, it is up to the board itself to make the decisions on what they will do going forward, and I will support those decisions.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On-It transit is another service that was founded and funded by the CRP through their core grant. Given that phase 1 of a two-year commuter pilot currently provides an alternative transportation choice for the residents of Turner Valley, Black Diamond, Okotoks, and High River to the city of Calgary and given that their summer pilot project from Calgary to Cochrane, Canmore, and Banff carried approximately 12,000 passengers from July 17 to September 4, are there currently plans to extend the On-It transit pilot project when the CRP funding ends on October 10, 2018?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I said, these decisions will be up to the growth management board, and our ministry will be there to support this. I know that this member is very keen on transit, and I recognize that the On-It transit project has had success and local support. I trust that the board's membership will make the positive decision that will help the region going forward, and we will be there to support them in that.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Finally, Mr. Speaker, given that on September 8 the Member for Calgary-Currie on behalf of the Minister of Transportation announced more than \$1.3 million for new transit projects in three Alberta communities, including building a new park-and-ride facility in Turner Valley, what will the purpose of this new transit infrastructure fund investment be if the On-It transit system discontinues service next October?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do know that regional transit is important not only to the member but to the Minister of Transportation. The On-It program has worked very well. Again, it will be up to the growth management board in the area to make those decisions. We do respect local autonomy and local leaders. I've been working quite closely with a lot of them of late and especially now that we have new municipal leaders out there. I'm getting ready to meet with a lot of them in the upcoming conventions. I'm hoping to hear some really positive things from them. I will be there to support them going forward.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll proceed with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members: if you would, conversations outside. The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Grain Elevators

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about a piece of our history that is quickly vanishing. At one time grain elevators dotted the province. At their height there were over 1,700 wooden grain elevators across Alberta. In 2012 it was estimated that only 130 remained on a railroad right-of-way. Three of those elevators remain in my community, and like many across the prairies, they are preserved by local community organizations.

These structures once served as the centre of their communities. Aside from selling grain, local farmers often met there to enjoy the coffee the elevator agent always had on. Today's visitors tell stories of their past visits, many having accompanied a family member after the harvest, others helping the agent run the elevator. Everyone has a memory of seeing these tall structures dotting the prairies. My favourite story tells of how World War II pilots, having difficulty landmarking over the prairies, would follow the tracks until they could read the name on an elevator and then locate themselves on the map.

Many communities are losing their elevators. Maintenance costs are a continual concern. St. Albert's most recent restoration of the community's twin elevators included extensive foundation work and cost nearly \$1.6 million.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is moving Alberta forward and making life better for all Albertans. As we move forward, I ask all members of this House to look around as they travel the province, and when they see a grain elevator, to give it a moment's respect. Many communities would not be here today without them.

Thank you.

AAMDC and AUMA Fall Conventions

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, next week elected officials and administrators from 69 rural municipalities will descend on Edmonton for the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties fall convention. The following week mayors, councillors, and municipal administrators from over 250 urban municipalities will attend their annual convention in Calgary.

So why is this important and noteworthy? Any Albertan who has travelled our province has municipal governments to thank for managing 75 per cent of Alberta's roads and 60 per cent of our bridges. If you've visited a library lately or taken your children to swimming lessons or hockey practice, those facilities are thanks to your municipal government. Our municipalities guarantee that

Albertans have clean drinking water, emergency services, and amenities like parks, local museums, and community halls.

As the level of government that Albertans are most likely to interact with regularly, municipalities are often the first to identify emerging issues. For example, the cities of St. Albert and Spruce Grove have submitted a resolution that calls attention to the difficulties municipal governments have when dealing with disaster response. Another AUMA resolution requests that the provincial government allow nonprofit housing organizations the ability to borrow directly from the Alberta Capital Finance Authority. The AAMD and C have proposed resolutions on such topics as centralized assessment, Alberta's land-use framework, and the code of practice for asphalt paving plants. Lastly, this year's municipal conventions are the first following last month's municipal elections, and it looks like there will be many new faces in attendance.

As a former municipal councillor I strongly encourage all members of the Legislature, especially government members, to attend both of these important municipal conventions as this is a key link to hearing from the grassroots of Alberta through their local elected officials on all matters pertaining to programs and services utilized by Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Edmonton-Meadowlark Constituency Update

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer I had the opportunity to connect with hundreds of constituents in my community to hear directly from them about their priorities. Through the many conversations I had on porches and at kitchen tables, I heard over and over again that Albertans do not want massive cuts to the provincial budget. They want a government that works to diversify the economy while protecting publicly delivered services. They want a government that is ready to build the province up, not tear it down.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Edmonton-Meadowlark have been waiting decades for investments in new schools and badly needed upgrades to the Misericordia, and under this government those investments are being made. West Edmonton continues to grow year over year, and our community needs a government that takes our public services and transportation needs seriously.

I'm proud to be part of a government that knows its priorities and knows the value of our public sector. They are not simply numbers to be cut, Mr. Speaker; these are real people. They are the first responders on the scene of a crime or collision, they are the doctors performing complex surgeries, they are the teachers creating the next generation of leaders, and they are the nurses who take care of our sick children.

2:50

Our government has renegotiated physician salaries, amalgamated agencies, boards, and commissions, and found other practical cost savings. These are the kinds of careful savings decisions that will actually help Albertans. I'm hearing every day about how optimistic Albertans in my community are about the future and how absolutely essential the infrastructure coming in under this government is to our neighbourhoods. The decision to invest in our province for the benefit of all Albertans at a time when costs are low, jobs are needed, and population growth is increasing demand is not ideological, Mr. Speaker; it's simply common sense. Albertans know what our plan is, and they know it is working.

Thank you.

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

Philippa Madill's Fundraising for Scoliosis

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's an old saying: when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. Today I want to bring to your attention a young constituent and philanthropist, Miss Philippa Madill. Life can be hard. All sorts of lemons can come into our lives, but it is how we face these challenges that will often determine whether we fail or whether we succeed and make lemonade out of life's hard choices.

Philippa was diagnosed with scoliosis, a deformity of the spine, at a young age, and she received regular treatment at the Stollery children's hospital. Philippa did not allow this setback to pull her down. Rather than focusing on herself, she is focused on volunteering in the community of Drayton Valley and in raising money for the Stollery children's hospital.

Starting at the age of five, Philippa began a lemonade stand, and over the past 10 years all of the proceeds have gone towards the Stollery children's hospital. For the past two years she has set up outside of the Drayton Valley triathlon and the Drayton Valley 100 bike race, helping to re-energize the athletes, spectators, and, in turn, benefit the programs at the Stollery. She has been appointed as an ambassador of the Stollery and was recognized as the Stollery superstar of the year at the first annual Stollery superstars party.

Philippa has raised funds for the hospice home that took care of her grandfather, and every year she hosts a Christmas party where friends bring presents and food hampers to the local Alberta child and family services organization. This 15-year-old philanthropist is also a volunteer extraordinaire. In her short life she has volunteered for a myriad of local groups like Cause for Critters and the River Valley Players Zombie Run, just to name a few.

It is important in life to recognize when the human spirit overcomes the challenges in life and gives back to the community that they live in. I am very pleased to bring to the attention of Albertans this wonderful young constituent and proud Albertan, Miss Philippa Madill.

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

Abortion Rights

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 29, 1970, a travelling caravan passed through Calgary, a caravan of women on their journey to Ottawa to protest the deadly antichoice laws stopping women from accessing safe, legal abortions. A photo in the *Calgary Herald* from that day shows these women standing strong, shoulder to shoulder, in front of them a coffin that represented the 2,000 women who died every year from illegal abortions.

Eighteen years and 36,000 deaths later the Morgentaler decision came down in 1988. The Supreme Court of Canada overturned our country's criminal abortion law and gave women the right to abortion on request without restrictions.

Mr. Speaker, I have never lived without the right to choose, but generations of women before me have, generations of women who were denied the rights guaranteed to all Canadians under section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the right to individual autonomy and the right to liberty.

The struggle for access is not over. There are still many who work actively to strip away women's rights. Even in this province, Mr. Speaker, there are politicians who began their career as antiabortion activists, and their followers are celebrating what they believe is the beginning of the reduction of choice for women in Alberta.

Right now at the only two abortion clinics in this province staff and clients run a gauntlet of hostile protesters every day. They face assaults and abuse. Clients face trauma and harassment as they try

to access their legal rights. Mr. Speaker, it's even more of a barrier for women who live in rural and remote communities.

When we combine easier access to reproductive choices along with strong, evidence-based sexual health education, we create generational change. We will not go back, Mr. Speaker. We will not accept a lesser voice in decisions about our bodies. This government will not let down the future generations of women who need us to fight for their rights, because women's rights are human rights.

Thank you.

Wildfire Control and Compensation

Mr. Schneider: This fall southern Alberta experienced a number of large-scale fires that caused the loss of property, livestock, and the tragic loss of a volunteer fireman. In the case of the Bindloss-Suffield fire, the cause was said to be a controlled ordnance explosion on the base. This fire damaged numerous ranches and killed several hundred head of cattle. It's now been reported that the Department of National Defence has accepted responsibility for the fire. Unfortunately, it is still unknown when the federal government will work out any compensation arrangements with those who were deeply affected by this avoidable tragedy. As we saw with the bovine TB fiasco last year, information from both levels of government is slow to come.

Once more it's Alberta's farmers and ranchers that are left with more questions than answers. Mr. Speaker, given that media reported that during the Bindloss fire the local fire departments could not go into the base and base fire departments expressed that they wouldn't fight the fire off the base, we hope that the minister in charge will ensure that some form of cross-training and reciprocal agreements get into place between these local and federal agencies so that should a situation ever arise again, there will be better co-ordination of effort.

The facts tend to indicate that this government seems ill equipped to deal with time-sensitive matters. We saw it after the Fort Mac fires. We saw it during the bovine TB crisis and the unharvested crops confusion. It could be that after the clumsy handling of the Bill 6 rollout, they seem incapable of dealing with rural Alberta competently. I say this as it was evident that the Premier spoke too quickly on the fires recently in the Waterton and Vulcan areas. When pressed about the effects on area residents, she was quick to claim that the NDP have Albertans' backs. When asked about compensation, she was also quick to promise but is again slow on details. Residents are already calling the local constituency offices looking for answers. This government's history indicates that if not pressured by the opposition, any forthcoming details will be coming very slowly once again.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stand and ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(7) to continue the Routine.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Bill 25

Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Minister of Labour to table Bill 25, the Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017, for first reading. [interjections]

The Speaker: He still can go. It's not 3 o'clock.

Mr. Carlier: As the government we are committed to ensuring that our professional regulatory organizations continue to serve and protect the well-being, safety, and public interests of all Albertans. The proposed amendments will merge the College of Alberta Professional Foresters and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists to create a single regulatory entity. That entity is the Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals.

Both organizations have asked for these changes, and their members voted in favour, more than 90 per cent, to ask the government to amend the act. This will mean that there are increased administrative efficiencies and expedited disciplinary processes that will save the organization a lot of time and money. By consolidating these organizations into one governing body, we are ensuring that there will be a strong and unified voice for our forestry professionals, who do amazing work in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a first time]

The Speaker: I don't believe there are any points of order.

3:00

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed to the next item of business, I'd like to make some additional remarks on the rotation of oral questions and members' statements. As you'll recall, in my comments on Thursday respecting the rotations, I encouraged the House leaders to come to an agreement on new rotations to reflect the changes to the composition of the Assembly. At 1:03 p.m. today my office received a House leaders' agreement; however, I have not had the chance to review it in any detail. Therefore, for the time being, I've prepared both an Oral Question Period and a Members' Statements rotation for the Assembly which reflects the current composition of the Assembly, and it is fair to all.

Before I delve into the details, I would like to note that I take seriously the first principle of parliamentary law, which is articulated in paragraph 1 of *Beauchesne's* sixth edition. It is the Speaker's role to protect the minority against the majority. I made several remarks to this effect in June 2015, at the beginning of this Legislature, in light of the House leaders' agreement on the Oral Question Period and Members' Statements rotations.

Additionally, I wish to implement these new rotations starting tomorrow, Tuesday, November 7, on what will be day 1 of the Oral Question Period rotation. As mentioned earlier, the House leaders, in consultation with the other members, provided another agreement. I'm prepared to consider it. Nonetheless, members will be provided copies of this rotation along with the revised projected sitting days calendar, which outlines the Members' Statements rotation.

For those members who may be wondering why it is the Speaker who ultimately determines the rotation of questions, I wish to quote from Speaker Kowalski's ruling from February 8, 2010. Facing a similar situation, Speaker Kowalski explained:

By convention, history, and practice the rotation of questions is not found in the standing orders, nor should it be. This absence is due in part to a recognition that it is the Speaker's responsibility to recognize members to participate in debate and the question period. The chair is fully aware that it is the members themselves who make the rules through the standing orders, and this chair has given effect to House leaders' agreements, but it is ultimately up to the chair to recognize members during question period.

His remarks may be found on page 17 of *Hansard* for that day.

Additionally, Mr. Kowalski on April 11, 2001, said that the practice of caucuses submitting lists to the Speaker's office . . . of those members wishing to ask questions that day will continue. In accordance with traditions of the Assembly, the Speaker will ultimately retain discretion when it comes to recognizing members during question period.

As to that reference please see page 11 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day.

Before I outline the details of the Oral Question Period rotation, I'd like to alert the Assembly as to the key considerations I examined in arriving at the rotation. The context for this allocation: the current composition of the Assembly is of great importance. First of all, currently the Assembly has the largest Official Opposition since 1993. There are 32 private members from the government caucus, 26 from the Official Opposition, two from the Alberta caucus, and one each from four single-member or independent caucuses, for a total of 64 private members. It is with this context in mind that the Oral Question Period rotation was devised.

Starting with the Alberta Party caucus, I have determined the allocation for this caucus by considering the overall standings of private members in the Assembly. The Alberta Party caucus, which has two members and will be the third-party opposition, is entitled to receive 10 questions per two-week period. The Alberta Party comprises approximately 6 per cent of private members but will be entitled to approximately 10 per cent of opposition questions.

With respect to the single-member caucuses and independent members in this grouping, each member is allocated one question per week, which reflects each group's standing in terms of seats in the Assembly. I would also add that one question per week for this grouping aligns with the well-established practice of the Assembly prior to the 29th Legislature. For instance, starting in February 2011, the then Member for Calgary-Currie, the sole member of the Alberta caucus at the time, received one question per week. In 2004 the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, the lone representative in the Assembly for the Alberta Alliance, similarly received one question per week starting in March 2005. This also occurred in October 2009 with the same member when he was the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, at that time the sole member of the Wildrose Alliance caucus.

There are many additional examples of instances in which independent members received one question per week. To name but a few, in March 2014 the members for Calgary-Varsity, Calgary-Foothills, and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo each received the sixth question once per week.

The specifics of the rotation are as follows. With respect to the details of the Oral Question Period rotation to be implemented starting Tuesday, this rotation is based on an eight-day, 16 questions per day format. The Official Opposition is entitled to the first three questions each day. Additionally, the Official Opposition receives questions 7 through 9 and questions 13, 14, and 16 each day. The Official Opposition receives question 10 on days 1, 3, 5, and 7 as well as question 11 on days 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8. Lastly, the Official Opposition is entitled to question 12 on day 2 and days 4 through 8. This amounts to a total of 87 questions over the eight-day rotation.

The Alberta Party caucus, the third-party opposition, receives question 4 on each day of the eight-day rotation. The Alberta Party

caucus is also entitled to question 11 on days 1 and 5, for a total, as noted, of 10 questions over the eight-day rotation.

The Liberal member, Progressive Conservative member, and independent members will each receive one question each four-day period as follows: the Member for Calgary-Mountain View on days 1 and 5, Vermilion-Lloydminster on days 2 and 6, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks on days 3 and 7, the Member for Calgary-South East on days 4 and 8.

Private members of the government caucus are entitled to questions 5 and 15 on each day of the rotation. They also receive question 10 on days 2, 4, 6, and 8 as well as question 11 on day 7 and question 12 on days 1 and 3. As a result, the government caucus receives a total of 23 questions over the eight-day period.

Now I turn to the question of how the questions have been reallocated as compared to the rotation that has been in force since the fall sitting commenced. The increase in the number of questions for the Alberta Party caucus to 10 for the eight-day rotation has resulted in a decrease in three questions to the Official Opposition, one question for the NDP caucus, and one fewer for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. The reallocation is justified based on the aforementioned allocation of one question per week to single-member caucuses, on the fact that the size of the Official Opposition has been reduced by one member with the departure of the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, and, lastly, because of the reduction in the number of private members in the government caucus by one with the appointment of the Member for Calgary-North West as the Minister of Infrastructure.

I would like to remind members that questions and responses should be succinct, being up to 35 seconds in length, and that preambles to supplementary questions are only allowed for the first four sets of questions each day.

With respect to the Members' Statements rotation the House leaders' agreement for October provided for a three-week allocation. As Standing Order 7(4) sets out, up to six private members may make statements of up to two minutes in length each day. Private members of the government caucus are entitled to three statements each sitting day. The Official Opposition receives three statements every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday except on week 3, when this caucus receives two statements. They also receive one statement on Thursday. The third-party opposition will receive one statement each week on Thursday.

This allotment accords with past practices whereby a two-member caucus received one member's statement per week. In March 2010 the ND opposition, which was a two-member caucus, received one member's statement each week. The same allocation was applied with respect to the two-member caucus in April 2008.

3:10

In this current arrangement the Official Opposition will be entitled to one fewer statement per three-week cycle. The one-member caucuses and independents each receive one statement each three-week period. Please consult the projected sitting dates calendar for further details.

As noted, let me say again that I will review the House leaders' agreement and make further comments at a later date. If there are additional suggestions, I'm prepared to discuss those with the House leaders and others who are impacted by this decision.

Orders of the Day

Written Questions

[The Clerk read the following written question, which had been accepted]

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act

Q17. Mr. Ellis:

How many charges have been laid under section 4 of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act since this section came into force?

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 206 Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. I'd first like to start out just by reiterating what the bill is about because it's been a little while since we were talking about it. This allows for the publication of advertisements by licensed adoption agencies publicizing the profiles of prospective adoptive parents that meet the requirements prescribed in regulation.

I'd like to start off by first of all thanking all of my colleagues in the Legislature for really wonderful discussions over this, amendments that have been made, and changes. I'm very, very grateful for the collaborative work that's been done on this very important piece of legislation to bring us up to date with the rest of Canada with respect to adoption. Thank you so much. I'm very, very grateful for the opportunity to stand and speak to this. I do have an amendment, but I'll bring that forward in just a little bit.

As most of you know, with respect to adoption in this province folks have not been able to use updates or technology or any other aspects to be able to provide profiles online to expectant parents. One of the interesting things that we find going forward in this process is that, as you can imagine, for anybody who is in the process of adoption, it's very, very stressful for both the adoptive parents and the expectant parents. To be able to have this process put online, to be able to stay at home and look through options that are available to you without having to go into a space where you may feel uncomfortable – given any particular situation there are a myriad of situations that you will be dealing with at any given time – to be able to have the ability to be at home, Madam Chair, and to look through the profiles and have the opportunity to spend some really good time, especially for an expectant parent that is looking into the adoption process, is I think a very, very respectful mechanism to have available to them. There's just so much information that we can put online.

Of course, one of the main things and some of the concerns that have been brought up by my colleagues in this Legislature is making sure that the regulations are there to protect people but also to make sure that that information is available. So far Ontario and Yukon and B.C. have already put their legislation into this century and, as a result, have seen increases in adoptions, which, of course, is what we want to see in these particular situations.

How we communicate has changed. I know I was dragged into technology kicking and screaming. I was probably the last person in my age group to get a cellphone, let alone learn how to text. It was really forced upon me. It was never – I've always been one of those people who loved having phone conversations. But, as we all

know, once we get used to the technology and understand how it works, it really does actually help you out with your ability to communicate in a very, very small sense. I used to run a music studio, and for the students that I had in my studio, I could send them e-mails, I could phone them, leave messages with their parents, but they only ever answered their texts. Like, that was it. That was the only opportunity that I ever had to speak with these kids and with their parents, actually, quite often in order to communicate with them about issues much less serious and much less stressful than what we're talking about here.

But in that discussion it inherently describes exactly what we're trying to talk about here, which is access to information for families that are wanting to expand their families and for those expectant parents that are looking to put their child up for adoption and potentially provide a magnificent gift to a family wanting to have a child.

The instant communication is part of it, but we want prospective parents to be able to create profiles for the expectant parent so that the process becomes a much more collaborative process. It's something that is healthy. It reduces stigma, which is hugely important in this particular situation because the ability to communicate at that level changes the entire dialogue and the discussion around this. Again, I can't state how important it is under these situations, I believe, to be able to pursue this in the quiet of your own home, without the eyes of other people looking at you. God only knows how it must feel for some people going into that situation. But I can honestly say that I think that if the research gets done first at home and then continues in the process with the agencies, we all go into this with a much healthier understanding of what it is that we're trying to accomplish.

I would like to also mention that one of the things that was really, really important when we were doing our stakeholder outreach on this, especially to expectant parents, was being able to actually look at the details of prospective parents. I think that having that input and understanding of where the child will go, having a say, being able to look at that not just on a piece of paper in a book somewhere, where you have to sit down and look through it, but actually being able to sit and ponder over what is going to happen to the child in question is very, very important. Again, it just speaks very, very well to the process and how much healthier the process could be.

On the positive side is the fact that adoptions will be a lot easier for parents here in Alberta. As we all know, too, from our outreach, a lot of parents were reaching outside of Alberta to look for adoptions because these options are available in other provinces.

3:20

I also want to thank my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for collaborating with me on this bill. As you know, he has some very personal background in adoption. I have to say that after hearing his story and many, many other people's stories, some of the members from the other side as well, the stories of adoption and the families that are created as a result of this are just miraculous, and when you see that family grow and you can participate in that with us in this Legislature – we'll be able to help with that.

Again, I want to thank again all my colleagues in the Legislature for their feedback on this. It's been greatly appreciated, and I really believe that the legislation will be strong, and I think it'll do very well for our families here in Alberta.

The other thing I wanted to mention was that the parties that are involved with regard to adoptions have also spoken very clearly about the need to change the restrictions. Again, we're going to want to be very careful with making sure that families are protected, that their children are protected, but as we know, there are inherent contradictions in that some children are profiled, and it's interesting

that that hasn't been able to be transferred to parents. So, again, this is just about updating the legislation. We will end up helping families to connect, and that is so important. The guidelines around being eligible for adoption need to be very, very strong, and that process will happen as families work with adoption agencies, moving this process forward, especially before putting a profile onto the Internet. Again, this is something that will be worked out in the regulations. I would imagine that there are other jurisdictions, like I've mentioned before, that have had very, very huge success with the ability to put profiles online.

One of the things that had been brought to my attention was that we had received some feedback where we hadn't been completely clear, from just reading the text of the bill, as to the intention, so I would like to move an amendment at this point if I can.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move that Bill 206, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017, be amended by adding the following preamble before the enacting clause:

Preamble

Whereas the Government of Alberta is committed to improving access to adoption;

Whereas the current legislation contains barriers that prevent prospective adoptive parents from publicizing their profiles for the attention of parents who are considering adoption in Alberta; and

Whereas removal of this barrier will enhance information regarding the options available to parents considering adoption that will assist and support them in making a decision appropriate for their individual circumstances.

The preamble, I'm hoping, will help to clarify the very, very simple aspect of what this bill is actually asking to do. Just to reiterate along with the preamble, the bill is very simply to be able to approve . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I apologize. You only get to speak for 10 minutes, and then somebody else gets a chance to speak, and then you'll have to – so I guess we've just run out of time to explain the amendment.

Mrs. Aheer: Oh, sorry. Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: No problem.

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

Mr. Cooper: Yes. I was so interested in the comments from the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View that perhaps she might just be able to conclude some final thoughts there.

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

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I promise I'll be quick. As a result of the feedback, this is why this preamble was brought forward. Again, just to reiterate, the bill is to allow prospective adoptive parents to be approved to advertise their profiles online on legitimate websites like, for example, Canada Adopts, which has been shown to show great success.

As I had mentioned earlier, right now Alberta's legislation prohibits this. In other provinces, like B.C., prospective adoptive parents are allowed to post their profiles on Canada Adopts. We would like to change that right here in Alberta and make sure that

we bring our legislation in line with this century and certainly be able to make sure that these folks have the ability to be able to seek each other out and make those connections.

The amendment adds the preamble and, hopefully, will reiterate the spirit of the bill. I would ask that the members recognize that the bill is clear that advertising is only to be legal if it's in accordance with strict regulations. The bill is to enable regulations to be created that bring us in line with other provinces.

I would like to again thank all of you and everyone in this Legislature for considering this bill and for the excellent debate and work that's been done to bring this legislation forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Chair. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 206, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017, as proposed by my good friend the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

This bill is truly a compassionate one as it assists adoptive parents, soon-to-be parents who want to ensure that their child is loved and nurtured their whole life. Of course, the bill is compassionate to the children who are needing a home.

There is no question that our adoption system will be better off from the changes Bill 206 introduces. I think our province has fallen behind the other provinces on this front, and I know it wasn't intentional, just an oversight. Thankfully, we have a member in this Assembly who paid attention to the individuals and then moved to action to help them. I think this is why Bill 206 is before us in this House.

While it might not be immediately apparent how it is going to affect our lives, let's be clear. I think it will impact our lives. I would like all my colleagues here today to think about the adoptive families that they know, and they undoubtedly know some families.

Before Bill 206, a motion introduced by the Member for Calgary-East which received unanimous support of the House wanted to know about the restrictions adoptive parents face in seeking to find a child whom they could make their own. Once looked at, the restrictions on posting their profiles are an unnecessary hurdle. It's been a long time, 30 years, since these restrictions have been reviewed and updated. We have seen a lot of changes ever since. We communicate far differently than before, as the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View was saying in her speech, so I think it's about time that we update some of the changes in this department.

Bill 206 will make the common-sense change allowing prospective parents to publicize their interest in adopting a child, which will let pregnant women and expectant parents who are considering adoption find them. What a well-intended change that is, I think. It'll do good for all the families who will be involved in this. Now, let's think for a moment. The bill will change the lives of two sets of parents and a child in a way that we'll never know. I think it's an honour for all of us to play a role in this humane process.

3:30

When the bill passes, it won't mean a free-for-all on advertising for prospective parents. The government will create regulations that will provide the controls necessary to ensure that advertising, prospective parents' postings abide by the necessary parameters. The big difference is that they'll be able to broaden their reach in their effort to adopt a child and complete their families. In a province that has seen a steadily dropping adoption rate, this kind

of move to facilitate more adoptions is critical, in my opinion. Now, if we look to B.C., which has modernized its adoption processes and allows prospective parents to publicize their interest in adopting, we can gain great hope that we will see a positive upwards shift in Alberta.

I hope that all members of this Assembly support this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to the amendment to Bill 206. This is a very worthy bill, worthy of everyone's support in this House. I believe that this amendment will provide some clarity to this bill as we move forward in our debate. I think that clarity is always a good thing. We need to understand: what is the intention of this bill? This amendment provides that kind of clarity.

It starts by pointing out that we need to improve access to adoption: "Whereas the Government of Alberta is committed to improving access to adoption." I believe that is something that all of us can support, and this amendment brings that clearly to the forefront for all of us in the Legislature, that this is the goal of this bill.

We see: "Whereas the current legislation contains barriers that prevent prospective adoptive parents from publicizing their profiles." Again, it brings clarity, Madam Chair, to the idea and to the understanding of this Legislature that there are some barriers that are stopping prospective parents from finding the children that will bring, in many cases, meaning to their lives and to both of them. The second point, about current legislation blocking prospective parents, I believe brings clarity to this piece of legislation.

Thirdly, the idea is that this prospective piece of legislation, Bill 206, is going to enhance information sharing, and it's going to assist and support prospective parents.

Again, these three points that are added to this amendment I believe will help all of us to understand the purpose and the nature of this bill. I believe it deserves our support.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak in favour of the amendment. As our colleagues in the House have already indicated, it's a great point to clarify some of the questions that were raised when we were initially discussing this in second reading. I'm a supporter of adoptions. I've had family members that have been through the adoption process in Alberta as well as looking at international adoptions. I believe that if we can support adoptive families to be able to work together with biological families and look at open adoptions, that's a benefit to all Albertans.

I will probably say more when we're back on the original bill, but I did want to just let the member know that I do support her amendment. I look forward to the continued debate in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, am happy to rise and support the amendment, which was given to us earlier today by the member opposite. I really appreciate putting the preamble in the bill because it clarifies, one, that the government is working really

hard to find the best solutions for all the children in Alberta. It also pays attention to the prospective needs of adoptive parents and is a reminder that it's not always easy for them to be able to move towards the path of adoption. Also, the reason I really appreciate having the amendment is that it clarifies that adoption comes in many different forms and that prospective adoptive parents are maybe adopting a baby or maybe adopting a child that's a toddler or, in a possible case, sometimes a teenager.

I appreciate that we are including the preamble that bears witness to what the government is trying to do around adoption. I will be supporting this amendment, and I will speak more fully later on about the main bill.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hanson: I knew you'd get it. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak on the amendment to Bill 206. You know, we've received some feedback that shows that it is not immediately clear, simply from reading the text of this bill, what it intends to do. The intention of the bill is rather simple. It's to allow prospective adoptive parents, after being approved, to advertise their profiles online on legitimate websites like Canada Adopts. Right now Alberta's legislation prohibits this. In other provinces like B.C. prospective adoptive parents are allowed to post their profiles on Canada Adopts, and it's a shame that they can't do so here in Alberta.

This amendment adds a preamble explaining the spirit and intent of this legislation, and it will help to guide the crafting of regulations. Anything, I think, that we can do as government and as opposition to streamline the adoption process is going to be an immediate benefit to both the adoptive parents and the children. Lord knows how fast they change, especially when they're babies and toddlers. I would implore the members to recognize that this bill is clear, that the advertising is only legal if it's in accordance with strict regulations. The bill is to enable regulations to be created that bring us in line with other provinces as opposed to keeping a blanket prohibition on the practice. I would encourage all members to support this amendment to this great bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: To the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, rise in support of this amendment. But I actually had a question for the mover of the amendment. When I read the second part of the preamble – and I'll read it right now: "Whereas the current legislation contains barriers that prevent prospective adoptive parents from publicizing their profiles for the attention of parents who are considering adoption in Alberta" – I think that there is some redundancy in that statement or at least a lack of clarity.

I had thought that we were trying to make it easier for persons who are wishing to adopt a child to present their profiles and that those profiles would come to the attention of persons who are considering giving up a child for adoption. I think that perhaps you need to change the wording of the statement to clarify that. It's my understanding that we're not going to be allowing the person putting up a child for adoption to be publicizing their situation because that would go against a whole bunch of privacy constraints. I would actually like to know the response to that.

3:40

Mrs. Aheer: I'm not quite sure I'm understanding where you're coming from. Basically, what the preamble does is just to elevate

the spirit of what's happening in the bill. The bill itself, the meat and potatoes of the bill, is exactly what you had said. It's about making sure that families have access to the ability to put their family's profile online for expectant or biological parents in this situation.

What the preamble does is that it just enhances the legislation by suggesting that we're going to remove those barriers. The language that is being used here has been actually vetted between both sides of this Legislature quite extensively to make sure that we've got the language that both the government and our side can use to make sure that the spirit of making sure that families that are wanting to adopt are able to put their profiles online – and, of course, in this situation it's about choice. You don't have to do this version.

As the other member had mentioned, there are a lot of different types of adoptions, a lot of different ways. We want to make sure that the legislation has the ability to encompass and be inclusive of many, many different varieties of adoption.

Also, we want to make sure that that connectivity is there, right? That's been the biggest issue that we've been talking about this whole time, to connect birth parents and expectant parents with adoptive parents.

I hope that answers the question.

Dr. Turner: Thank you to the member for that.

I mean, if I could just suggest a friendly thing, “adopting” rather than “adoptive,” so “Whereas the current legislation contains barriers that prevent prospective adopting parents.” Actually, “adoptive” I'm not sure is a word.

Mrs. Aheer: To legal counsel it is.

Dr. Turner: What's that?

Mrs. Aheer: That comes from legal counsel.

Dr. Turner: Anyway, it's a comment. I appreciate that it is a preamble that won't have any effect on the actual . . .

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Just to clarify on the language, “adopting” is the assumption. We can't make that assumption until that actual relationship happens between the parents. “Adoptive” gives the obvious space that it is a possibility, but we don't know. There are no assumptions that should be made in legislation, let alone in a preamble, so we want to make sure that the description of what's going on with that verb actually describes the process, not the end result.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Chair. It gives me great pleasure to rise and support this amendment and, of course, Bill 206, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017, as proposed by my dear friend the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View. You know, when we join opposition caucus, we're provided with what we would call critic areas. It's then, of course, our job to review the work of a minister or ministry and their portfolio, which is assigned, and to work on behalf of the people of Alberta. I've played that role in the past as a critic for Children's Services, and it gave me great pride and fulfillment to perform that work. In fact, it's something that I will continue to do.

I mention this because Bill 206 and an amendment such as the one before us right now offer the kind of positive change that will enhance the lives of children, and for that reason alone it has, of

course, my full support. I congratulate my colleague the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View for her foresight to bring this bill, that will change lives. You know, these much-needed amendments to allow prospective adoptive parents to advertise to expectant mothers and parents looking for loving families for their child have likely been a simple oversight over the past many years. But it takes someone to recognize the humane nature of the changes to Bill 206 and that they will bring and put this in a legislative agenda, which the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View has done. We are fortunate in this House to gain these opportunities, and they should never be squandered. You know, I've seen many good bills come before this House, and this, of course, is one of them, and this amendment is one of them.

Private members' bills are interesting pieces of legislation. To ensure success, the sponsoring members need a concept that all members of the House can support in a bill such as this. The member has to be targeted in what she is proposing, and she has to reach out and work with many others to ensure that everyone voting on it appreciates its importance. In this case my colleague seems to have covered all that she, of course, necessarily needs to cover. Bill 206, you know, will have a positive, humane aspect on the lives of Albertans, most especially Alberta's children. Of course, children are the most important thing. That, I think, we can all agree upon in this House. The proposed amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act are clear, and they are targeted. There is nothing partisan in any way about this bill, and I commend again the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View for that.

Alberta's adoption rate needs improving. That is clear from the concerning drop in recent years, especially when compared to British Columbia, which does allow prospective adoptive parents to post profiles. If we can make a difference, we should make a difference, and we can make that difference through Bill 206. I applaud the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, and I urge all members to do so as well in supporting this amendment and supporting this bill. The big difference is that, you know, they'll be able to broaden their reach in their effort to adopt children and complete their families. In a province that has seen a steadily dropping adoption rate, this kind of move to facilitate more adoptions is critical. We look to B.C., which has a modernized the adoption process and allows prospective parents to publicize their interest in adopting, and we can gain great hope that we will see a positive upward shift here in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

The Chair: Are any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to express some similar concerns regarding the second sentence in the preamble proposed by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View that were expressed by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, in that it didn't seem as clear as it could be. When I was reading it, I thought that the last part, where it says “for the attention of parents who are considering adoption in Alberta,” didn't make it clear that it actually may mean parents who may offer a child for adoption in Alberta. That, I think, should be clarified so that it's really clear that the people who are prospectively publicizing their profiles are doing so to an audience comprised of people who may offer a child for adoption. I think that would help clear things up.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Sorry. This was in respect to the end of the second line there – right? – where it says, “from publicizing

their profiles for the attention of parents who are considering adoption in Alberta.” Is the lack of clarity between prospective parents and biological parents? I’m not quite sure that I understand the question. Would you mind clarifying again? I’ll try better to answer that.

The Chair: Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I’ll try to be clear in my clarity request. My understanding of the language in the second portion of the second sentence of the preamble is that where it says “for the attention of parents who are considering adoption in Alberta,” that describes people who are seeking to offer a child for adoption, correct? That would be the audience to whom people who are publicizing their profiles will direct that profile. I think it should be clear. Rather than saying “parents who are considering adoption,” it should say “parents who may offer a child for adoption” so that it’s clear exactly what end of the transaction they’re at.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. I’ll answer that if that’s okay. It’s a very fair question. Actually, I think that originally it was worded that way. My understanding is that potential prospective biological parents or couples that are wanting to put their children into adoption preferred this language around considering adoption versus saying words like “put a child up for an adoption” or those kinds of – like, that was my understanding. I think this language is still trying to be very respectful of the biological parents.

Thank you so much.

3:50

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: We are back on Bill 206. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 206, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017, and to move an amendment. I do have the original and the copies, and I will wait to speak to the amendment until you have received that.

The Chair: This is amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms Goehring: I move that Bill 206, Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017, be amended as follows: section 4 is repealed and the following is substituted.

4 This Act comes into force on Proclamation.

I would like to start by thanking the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View for bringing this important issue again to our House. I believe that every child in Alberta and every child deserves to grow up in a healthy, loving environment that supports their development and prepares them for a very bright future. I know that all members of this House are committed to ensuring that the adoption process provides the best outcomes for children and meets the needs of all families.

The fact is that adoptive families play an absolutely important role in promoting the health, safety, happiness, and well-being of many of Alberta’s children. That’s why we supported a motion by the Member for Calgary-East on this issue, and that’s why we are supporting the intention of this bill from the Member for

Chestermere-Rocky View. Our government is committed to ensuring that children up for adoption are provided with a loving and nurturing home. It’s important that we provide the appropriate tools for adoptive parents to ensure that families are prepared to succeed and support adoptive families and birth families as they move through the adoption process, which we know is difficult. Part of this work includes removing the barriers to adoption when removing these barriers is in the best interests of children and their families.

Madam Chair, we are aware that adoption is an important part of supporting strong families and building resilient communities. That’s why we’re committed to listening to our families and stakeholders as we explore how our policies can best support Alberta children and families.

We’ve heard from some families and licensed adoption agencies who support a change to current legislation which would allow prospective adoptive families to post profiles online; however, we have also heard from other families and agencies who do not support this change. We want to continue to listen to families as well as relevant stakeholders as we explore how our policies can best support families.

Currently section 85(1) of Alberta’s Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and section 25(2)(d)(iii) of the adoption regulation prohibit prospective adoptive parents and adoptive agencies from publishing any advertisements related to the adoption of a child. While legislation does allow the sharing of information between prospective adoptive families and birth families in order to facilitate an adoption, such information sharing must also preserve confidentiality. This often translates into private communication between parties rather than public dissemination of information; however, because public dissemination is seen as disclosure of information beyond the intent of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, posting of online profiles with widespread access falls under the category of a publication. As such, it’s not allowed under our current legislation.

Furthermore, the adoption regulation prohibits identifying specific adoptive parents. In other words, the posting of an online profile or a dear birth parent letter would identify a prospective adoptive parent and would therefore be contrary to the current regulation.

Given that the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View’s bill is seeking to do a very similar thing that the Member for Calgary-East called for, we’ve already heard from some families and stakeholders on this issue. Madam Chair, some families feel that Alberta’s current legislation is too restrictive. For example, families and agencies point out that other jurisdictions allow adoptive parents to connect with birth parents through social media postings, and there is merit to this. Currently British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Yukon allow the posting of online adoptive family profiles. The other nine jurisdictions prohibit this practice. Our government shows a deep concern for this issue. We are always looking for ways to improve core supports and programs, including the adoption system in our province, so it’s important to understand what the best practices are for publishing online profiles.

Recent engagement with Alberta’s licensed adoption agencies and ongoing communication with prospective adoptive parents reflects a divided opinion regarding publication. Some reasons as to why there should be a publication ban are very valid. There are concerns relating to privacy. This might also remove the option of birth parent counselling before selection of an adoptive family, which might lead to inappropriate matching, where birth parents are selecting families. Several others have raised concerns, including increased costs for adoptive families as agencies would need to develop the appropriate information technology infrastructure to

support online advertising, cybersecurity measures, and a monitoring process to respond to online inquiries.

Insurance providers have quoted additional costs due to risks of fraud against adoptive families. At present Alberta adoption agencies can provide information about approved adoptive families to birth parents through a password-protected portion of their website. As mentioned, while legislation allows the sharing of information between prospective adoptive families and birth families in order to facilitate an adoption, such information sharing must also preserve confidentiality. But as has been discussed many times in this House, the amount of joy that adoption brings children and families is absolutely incredible. It builds strong communities and allows children to grow up in a caring, nurturing home where they can absolutely flourish.

While every adoption case is different, I agree with the intent of this bill. There is insufficient time to consult with the adoption agency community and develop necessary regulations before the current coming-into-force date. Moreover, the ongoing Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention may also be recommending changes to adoptions under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, and it would be best to consider all changes to the legislation holistically. So I propose this amendment to change the date that this bill comes into force to the date of proclamation.

Once again, I would like to thank the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View and the opposition for their advocacy on this very important issue, and I would ask that all members of this House support this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to 206. I have, certainly, some vested interest, having now five adopted grandchildren in the family and having learned a little bit about the process. These are all international adoptions, but they have to follow the same prescribed processes, of course, at least in country.

I want to just quote from my daughter's letter to me around this whole bill because she's so familiar with the issues and is herself a director of an adoption agency in Calgary. She's indicated that they're supportive of online profiles, consistent with what the previous member has stated, as long as they're password protected. The concern is that if they aren't password protected, birth parents could go the private route and arrange adoptions outside the protection of an oversight agency, and even though they would still be subject to the regulations under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, they would be very much on the move towards that particular relationship, that they'd developed online prior to any counselling or support that might be offered, while they're still in the process of considering who and how or even if to adopt out their child.

4:00

Their decision, in fact, to give a child to an adoptive family could be overturned in court if the birth parents can prove that they did not get the proper counselling before making a decision. If an agency protects the majority of the online info, they can just give a birth parent the password to access profiles after they have received the appropriate counselling and are still choosing to move forward.

I think that's an important consideration.

She also indicated that there should be, as early as possible in the process, some kind of assessment or home study. As it is right now, an individual could choose anyone to become the guardian to the child without any assessment or home study. That would be a

private arrangement. If the individual had seen, as my daughter has seen, a number of unwell biological parents make decisions they regret afterwards because they didn't have the awareness, didn't have the support, didn't have the time to consider – the lack of oversight or assessment required leads to ongoing challenges, ongoing conflicts, even litigation that could be avoided. So some real cautions here.

She also indicated that there needs to be significantly better collaboration between the private agencies and the department, with better training for front-line workers around adoption. For example, she has seen indications where a woman has repeatedly given up children, and that should have been anticipated in an individual's case. Counselling should have been given throughout the pregnancy instead of suddenly being faced with a birth and an emergency kind of situation where the child may be taken into custody, apprehended, placed in care, but not be eligible for adoption until much older because the preparations hadn't been properly put in place. So calling for more around the areas of regulations, for sure, but I didn't want that to get lost.

She also indicated that there is a lack of postadoption supports for all adoptions, whether government or private agency. Adoption breakdowns can result in an adopted child being placed in foster care if another family is not available for adoption, so they might as well get involved in prevention and further support of the adoptive families. We certainly have seen lots of evidence of this in our children in care review panel, where a number of young people have come forward to talk about the unsatisfactory placement, the difficulty in leaving that placement, and the trauma around multiple different placements after the first one didn't work.

Those are my comments. It doesn't contradict anything that the amendment is suggesting, but, I guess, many of us would want to make sure that the regulations to go along with this bill recognize these serious balancing issues that have to be made between the rights of the birth family to know and understand and be supported and the rights of the adopting family to have their information out there so that they could be considered.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. I rise today to speak with some cautious reservation in favour of the amendment as I think that this issue is of critical importance in that we arrive at a place where the legislation can in fact be passed. Madam Chair, you'll know that I've risen in this House on numerous occasions to speak to this important issue. I know that in times past my motivation has sometimes been questioned. But I've checked it with the Ethics Commissioner, and I'm okay to proceed.

My reservation today predominantly comes around what will ultimately allow the government's ability to potentially not proclaim the legislation. In changing the coming-into-force date to "on Proclamation," we have seen with numerous pieces of legislation in the past the legislation never be proclaimed. In fact, the government has five years to proclaim the legislation. I'm not suggesting that that is exactly what will happen, but I am suggesting that that could happen. From time to time there are difficult decisions to be made with respect to sensitive issues like adoption, and a government will encourage its members to go ahead and vote in favour of a piece of legislation like this for fear of the optics of voting against adoption. In fact, we just passed the amendment of "whereas the Government . . . is committed to improving access to adoption." There's widespread agreement with respect to that being the goal, but politically speaking there can sometimes be challenges around that. So from time to time I have seen other governments do

exactly what we see happening here. There's a change so that, in fact, the government can vote in favour of the legislation, but it provides them with a totally limitless time to proclaim it over the next five-year period. Then, at that point in time they would have to make a decision on what to do with that legislation.

There are numerous examples of legislation that has been passed in this Assembly and never proclaimed: the Forest Reserves Amendment Act; the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act; the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Trails Act; the Energy Statutes Amendment Act; Health Professions Act; Health Professions Amendment Act; the Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act; the Education Act. There are lots and lots of examples where governments have passed legislation and then chose not to proclaim it.

Listen, I'm going to vote in favour of this amendment, but I do want to put a flag in the ground today that I hope that's not the government's intention and that the government isn't utilizing this as political cover for not wanting to make a tough decision on a very important issue. I know that members of that side of the House are genuine in their comments about the need to improve access to adoption, and I also know that members on that side of the House are genuine in their comments around the desire to improve access to information, and I know that they're genuine in their comments with respect to some of the concerns that have been shared here inside the House around regulations and the privacy concerns and the myriad of issues that come along with adoption. But, Madam Chair, you'll know that any time you involve people, things get complex.

It's our role to make sure that we're doing everything we can to balance the complexities. I appreciate the fact that that takes time. I also want to make sure that we do everything we can to ensure that this continues to be an issue that is at the fore, that doesn't just get passed and then forgotten about. I know that there are members on that side of the House that are passionate advocates for adoption, and I also know that it is very important to members on this side of the House that we do everything that we can.

I'd like to reiterate that this particular piece of legislation is not the be-all and end-all when it comes to some of the challenges that our adoption system faces. I know that I worked extensively with my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. It was never her intention that we would solve all challenges but more to raise the profile of adoption in the province of Alberta. I think it is a critical profile that needs to continue to be raised. That's why I was so pleased to support the amendment that put into the preamble: "whereas the Government of Alberta is committed to improving access to adoption."

4:10

I can tell you as someone who has been intimately involved in the adoption system that there are lots of barriers to adoption. Some of them are in place with lots of great reasons, and others are in place that provide little value and only make barriers. I'm certainly of the opinion that putting Albertans at a significant disadvantage when it comes to advertising their profiles online is one of those barriers that doesn't promote adoption and, in fact, decreases people's ability to access the system and to be on an equal playing field with many other Canadians across the board. I think that it's very important that as we move forward, we put in the necessary checks and balances but not present barriers to the process. Unfortunately, sometimes the adoption process can also be an instigator of pain. This is certainly one pinch point that I've heard from many, many, many families all across the province, that they feel pain with respect to their inability to have the same sort of access that other Canadians have.

The adoption process, Madam Chair – and I'll close with this. I've said it before in this House. I wish that we lived in a world where adoption wasn't necessary. I wish that these sorts of issues didn't come before the Assembly, but that, unfortunately, isn't the case. It is imperative upon each and every one of us that we do everything that we can to find loving homes for children. To be clear, not every adoption works out perfectly, just like not every parent that has children biologically is perfect. I get some concerns when we see decisions being made upon the fact that some adoptions might not be successful. We need to operate with checks and balances and ensure that we do everything we can to make adoptions as successful as possible but also recognize that we cannot legislate for every eventuality.

So I will reiterate to the government members: when this amendment passes, please don't allow this piece of legislation to go on a shelf somewhere that no one cares about any longer. Don't use this for political cover to be able to vote in favour of an adoption bill that otherwise would be disappointing for many Albertans if you voted against it, that is truly just the tool that is used to ensure that the appropriate checks and balances are put in place.

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

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Chair. I really think it's so great that we're talking about this bill today because this month, the month of November, is Adoption Awareness Month. This bill not only provides an opportunity to discuss the challenges of adoption but also to reinforce the fact that in Alberta we really support adoption and that we understand that everyone who's involved in adoption does it with a deep, deep level of pain very often but also that the government is committed to ensuring that all children in care or in guardianship or in other situations do have the best solutions for them as they grow up.

Because November is Adoption Awareness Month and we're talking about adoption, I thought I would start by talking about the importance of adoption in families and why I commend the member opposite from Chestermere-Rocky View to have raised this issue in this setting.

When I last spoke on this bill, I mentioned my youngest son, Isaac, and his adventure in Egypt. His adventure in Egypt really cemented for me the fact that when adoptive parents adopt children, they become your child. It doesn't really matter where they came from or how they become part of your family; they're really your own. What happened to me in Egypt was that my son, who was teaching in Egypt at the time, invited us to go to his classroom when we visited, but he had forgotten to tell his class that he was adopted. When we arrived in his classroom in Cairo, the children were very surprised that we did not look like him, that he looked like them and that we looked white. So for the first half an hour to an hour of the class time the kids were looking at us and looking at Isaac and really wondering about the fact that he was calling us mom and dad.

I like to tell this story because it shows how integrated it is, as other members have said, that when you adopt a child, they become your child and how they came to you is not important. What's really important is the love and care that you have for children in your home. When I think about adoption and the fact that we're talking about this bill, this is what I really think about. I think about

providing children who are in need of love and in need of parents, guidance, and support wherever they come from. So I'm glad that we're talking about it, and I'm glad that we're also talking about the challenges that both adoptive parents and birth parents may have.

First of all, I want to talk again about some of the issues that we raised the last time. I think we need to really clarify that this bill is not going to cause the ability for parents to adopt more babies. Adoption is not just the adoption of babies. You can adopt a child that's a baby or a toddler or a young adult. I really wanted to ensure that when we talk about adoption, we don't just mean babies but all children in need of an adoptive home. I know the government has done a wonderful job of trying to find permanent homes, be it in permanent guardianship or an adoption for these children, and I think that it's good for us to remind ourselves how many children in Alberta need a place to call home.

Also, I wanted us to be reminded that part of the challenge around adoption is that we have to protect the children, and we have to be careful of any kind of arrangements where children may be offered more as a commodity than a child that needs a home. I'm so glad that so many overseas countries have really tightened up their adoption services, as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View said, to ensure that none of this happens.

I also think that it's really important that if we are going to start putting out profiles about families, we make sure that prospective adoptive families are not discouraged from adoption because of their status in the community, the money that they've be making, or the job that they have. That was very scary for me. I went to an adoption agency, and my profile was given to birth parents. I always wondered: you know, is it a problem that my husband was a letter carrier at the time, and what are birth parents looking for? I just want us to be very cautious that we don't continue an environment where people are selected as prospective adoptive parents just because of the money they make or their status in life. That's one of the things that makes me a little bit wary about the advertising, but I'm happy to support the bill and the intent. What we're trying to do is make sure that all the children in our communities find a home.

4:20

I also really want to talk about the language. I'm really glad to see that today we have changed our language and that we don't use the language "giving up." Really, it's hurtful for me when we talk about adoption as something that a loving birth mother and birth parents do in a negative way. I think we always have to respect the birth parents and the pain that they go through and how they really want the best for their children. It's a gift. It is not "giving up." I wanted to thank all the members today for using really appropriate language.

As we approach Christmas, I would like to urge all members to really make sure that we don't use the words "adopt a child" or "adopt a family" at Christmastime. It's very painful for me and for other people when we use the word "adoption" to mean a one-time event at Christmastime where we adopt a family and give them a basket. I think it really demeans the word "adoption," and it really demeans what happens in an adoption. I'd like to encourage us to view adoption always as a committed, permanent relationship between a child and their adoptive parents, and that very often includes the birth parents or the extended family of the birth parents. It reminds me how often I have talked to grandparents whose grandchild is part of an adoptive family and how they would long also, just like the birth mother, to be part of an open adoption. I'm really hoping that this Christmas we can urge everyone to change the language to honour the people involved in adoption.

Also, in this House many of my colleagues have spoken about their painful stories. I want to commend the MLA for Lethbridge-East, who shared her own story about adoption, and the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs for her story, too. I always appreciate when we can relate a bill like this to the fact that we as MLAs are facing the same kind of challenges and decisions that ordinary Albertans do. So I'd like to really commend them for sharing their stories, for sharing the pain that comes with adoption.

I want to talk a little bit about adoptive parents. I understand the pain of waiting year after year, whatever way you go through adoption, either through government, private agency, or international adoption, the time that you wait for a child to be placed in your home, how impossible it looks, the costs of it all, and the documents you have to prepare: the medical exams, the notarized documents, the history of your finances. I remember having to produce a document that told everyone how much money I had in the bank, and I thought to myself: if I was pregnant, nobody would want to know how much money I have in the bank.

Adoptive parents go through a lot in their search to have a child, and I don't think this bill is going to reduce the pain of waiting for a child or even the timing of having a child. I want to make sure that as we support this bill, we understand that it might help but that it's not going to lessen that pain, and especially it's not going to lessen the hardship that comes with the waiting.

You know, I think I spoke about it last time, but I remember wondering every single time that a friend of mine became pregnant or when somebody would talk about their children: when will it be my time to have a child?

I wanted to end by thanking the member. I will be supporting the amendment and the bill.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that I had the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment and raise some concerns and reservations, but I just wanted to briefly mention a couple of things with respect to adoption, specifically some of the language that we use around adoption, and also just highlight some of the things that I think we all need to keep in mind as we go forward with respect to adoption and how we interact with those who have or haven't adopted and just, hopefully, provide a little bit of context for the House.

One thing, I think, is very, very important – and I mentioned it earlier today even – that this bill certainly isn't the be-all and end-all. I think that we need to make sure as an Assembly and as a government that we are doing all that we can to be supportive of adoptive parents as well as biological or birth parents. I thank the member opposite for her comments around: this isn't about "giving up" but that it is about adding to. There's still a lot of stigma around adoption, and I think that we all need to be responsible for breaking down some of those barriers, not just the legislative barriers but just the way that people speak about adoption, generally speaking.

I know as an adoptive dad that from time to time people will ask some very unique questions. Listen, you know, we have open adoptions, and both of our girls know that they're adopted, and we speak openly to them about adoption and the joys and hardships and pleasures and pain that adoption comes with. Frankly, I am taking a lot of liberties this evening with their story, because while I have a personal adoptive story, they also have an adoptive story that is theirs to share and not necessarily mine to share. But in the context of the larger issue, I am willing to bridge that gap or cross that bridge because I think it's important.

I just wanted to remind the House or have a bit of a chat around the way that we engage with folks who have adopted. I think it's very important that as we engage with family of adopted children, we allow that family to determine how they would like that story to be told, so I encourage folks to be cautious with the words they use. I think a good rule of thumb for people to remember is that if you wouldn't ask a question, say, about plastic surgery, you wouldn't ask the same question with respect to adoption.

An example of that would be, "Are those your real lips?" if you'd had plastic surgery on your lips. I know that I have been part of a lot of adoptive questions like: are those your real kids? Or: do you love those lips as much as you loved your old lips? You get what I'm aiming at here in that sometimes people will differentiate my children because of the way that they arrived in my family. I want to encourage members of the House, as they're engaging in adoptive conversations, that they use caution. As I said, a good rule of thumb is that if you wouldn't ask it about someone who has had plastic surgery, perhaps don't ask the same question on adoption.

The other thing that I just wanted to highlight is around the way that families are built in our province. Families come in so many different shapes, sizes, and ways that I think it's important that we encourage families in all forms and shapes. I never, frankly, thought that I would be an adoptive parent. I had always believed or thought that I was going to have a large tribe of biological children. However, that wasn't going to be the case in our family.

I remember the very first day that I met our second-born. She was in care of the department, and we had provided a storybook for her of our family prior to us meeting her for the very first time. So she had a book of pictures of my wife and I and our first-born, and each day the foster family was going through the book with her and saying, you know, "This is going to be your dad, and this is going to be your mom, and this is going to be your brother, and this is going to be your dog, and this is the house that you're going to live in" and preparing her for what was a very, very significant transition in her life.

4:30

I remember the very first day. I had literally just gone to the foster family's home to drop off some clothing and a few things that she required in order to get the transition ready to roll. They happened to be home, and my daughter came around the corner, and we saw each other for the very first time. She looked up at me – and she had seen me in the book on numerous occasions prior – and she said: hi, dad. In whatever way it's possible, that moment was very similar to the moment when our first-born son was born naturally and the doctor said: it's a boy.

Families get knit together in incredible ways, and adoption is one of those things, so I'd just encourage all members of the Assembly to do what they can to celebrate adoptive families, to celebrate birth parents, to support adoptive children as they all go through unique challenges and struggles with things that they will never know. We all have a role to play in that. The language we use around adoption is so critically important.

I thank all members of the House for their input on this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Smith: Madam Chair, I cannot think of anything that is more important in my life than family. As a teacher of 30 years I know and I saw many families, and I saw many kids. I know that not all families are perfect. I mean, mine wasn't. The family that I grew up in was not perfect. I did not have perfect parents. I was not a perfect parent. But I can think of nothing more important than having a family.

As a kid I was so blessed to grow up in a family where I had two parents that loved each other and still love each other. I grew up in a family where I knew that I was loved, and I am still living in a family where I know that I am loved without reservation. My father just had his 80th birthday. My mother just had her 79th, I think. And to this day I cannot remember a single time in my life, no matter how badly I screwed up, when I knew that I wasn't loved. I believe and I hope that my kids could say the same thing. If there's one thing that I would like to be able to go to my grave with, it would be that my kids would say at my funeral that they knew they were loved.

So when we stand up to speak about Bill 206 and we talk about the chance to help kids have a family, I'm not sure that there is anything more important that we could do in this Legislature than to help that come true. Family is the foundation of everything that we do in this society, and providing that opportunity for a child to know that they are loved and that they will always be loved: nothing is more important than that.

This bill allows us to help connect prospective parents to their prospective children. How could we not support this bill? It's been very gratifying to me to hear, on both sides of the House, people's support for this bill.

Anybody that wants to talk to my middle son will know that I am not, never will be, and do not want to be a technology geek. I am not very conversant with technology. I remember the first day I got my cellphone, which was only about six years ago, five years ago.

An Hon. Member: Seriously?

Mr. Smith: Seriously.

My wife had picked it up, and it was sitting on my plate in my kitchen. I sat down at the kitchen table. My son had been bugging us for a cellphone. He wanted a cellphone for probably three years. He says, "Dad, what's that?" "Well, I think it's my new cellphone." And this look of sheer horror gets on his face, and his jaw drops to the tabletop, and he looks at me, and he goes, "You're getting a cellphone?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "That's like giving a spaceship to a caveman." I couldn't even argue with him. Sometimes your kids are just right.

So I'm not sure that I really understand all of the technology about this, but I can say this, that if it helps to connect prospective parents with kids and if it helps to do so through a medium that is responsible and reasonable, then it has my support.

Many of us have talked about having adoptive kids. I know I've mentioned before in this House that I have got three cousins, two of whom are still alive, that were adopted, and I know that they were adopted into a loving family and that we are together, as an extended family, one unit. They are creative, loving, and caring individuals, that all have their own families with as well-adjusted kids as we ever can have, because of the love that was poured into their lives by my aunt and uncle.

I am quite happy to stand here today and to support this piece of legislation because I believe that it changes people's lives. In the faith that I follow, it says that there's nothing greater than love. Nothing greater than love. Now, sometimes my parents applied that love liberally to my backside, but it was still out of love. Sometimes I didn't understand that love when it was applied, when it said, "No, you've got to do your homework," or "No, you can't go out tonight," but it was all love. So I will support this bill because it helps to promote love and it helps to promote families and it helps to promote lifelong relationships. It's worthy of our support.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd just like to speak briefly. My colleague from Drayton Valley talked about the importance of family and removing barriers, and I think this bill actually does that. I spoke earlier, when I was talking to one of the amendments, about how fast kids change, especially babies. Some of you may not know, but I became a grandfather on September 5th. Believe me, I saw Lily on Saturday, and I know that when I see her next week, on Friday, she'll have gained a pound, and she'll be changing.

4:40

At that time they're also very, very attached to the person that they're with. In some cases, if a child is in foster care, they're getting very attached to that foster parent. Anything that we can do to reduce the wait times and streamline the adoption process, I think, is going to be very, very important for the child, and that's who we're really here for. We talked about that.

Now, I'd also like to speak about – and I'm sure that you all get the e-mails as well from the Child and Youth Advocate. You know, we talk about how important family is and how important love is, and when we look at these young teenagers that are in foster care and getting bounced around from one place to another, it would be so much nicer if we could have a permanent solution for them for the entire time that they're growing up instead of bouncing them around from one foster home to another.

You know, I sat on a panel for the member for Rocky Mountain House, who couldn't make it to a meeting. At one of the meetings they had some of the young adults, 17, 18 years old, that had been through the system. One of the comments that was made was that they survived not because of the system but despite the system. Some of the heart-wrenching stories that they told – I know, Madam Chair, that you were there at those meetings.

One in particular that stuck out to me was a young lady that was 17 years old at the time of our meeting and had been taken away from her foster home that she'd been at. I believe she was there from two years old to 14 years old. When she tried to get an explanation from the caseworkers, they couldn't really give her one because it was freedom of information. She later had to find out, through a FOIP request, that the reason that she'd been taken away from her family – and they were her family; they called her their child; it was quite a story – was because the family had an age allotment for foster care, so they weren't allowed to keep her after she was 14 years old. But nobody had approached the family to offer adoption or approach this girl to say: you know, adoption is a part of the process that could happen.

You know, when you hear stories like that – and then we get these reports from the Child and Youth Advocate – and you consider what some of these kids have gone through in their lives, it is heartbreaking. I think what we should be doing here is working on legislation that's going to make adoption easier, going to make life better for foster kids. Like I said, having that baby get attached to one foster parent and then moved to another foster parent and then moved to another foster parent and then eventually into an adoptive situation just doesn't make sense for the child at all.

I really hope that this legislation goes through and does get proclaimed in short order so that it isn't languishing on the backbenches or on a table in a backroom of the Legislature somewhere. I think we'd be doing a real disservice to children in our province, children in Canada, and adoptive parents like the case of our colleague who adopted two little girls. You know, anything that we can do to help streamline that situation and that process, of course, ensuring that the adoptive parents are the right people but also ensuring that the people that are giving up the child are making

the right decisions and making sure that they have the supports they need as well – with that, I believe I will sit down.

Thank you very much. I will be supporting this bill wholeheartedly.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 206 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Woollard: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 206. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 207 Regulatory Burden Reduction Act

Mr. McIver: I will move the bill on behalf of the hon. member and see what the House has to say about that.

Are there not 15 minutes of debate still left on this bill?

The Deputy Speaker: Just for clarity, because we did complete the process and the members voted and passed the bill out of committee, then we automatically go to the next order of business until the time on the clock ends.

Mr. McIver: I appreciate that.

The Deputy Speaker: For clarity, you're moving second reading of Bill 207 on behalf of the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner?

Mr. McIver: On that we're clear and we agree, yes. But people can still speak to it, correct? Okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 207, the Regulatory Burden Reduction Act? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 207, the Regulatory Burden Reduction Act. As our government has made clear, Alberta businesses have a bigger economic impact than businesses anywhere in this country. However, this bill will not improve Albertans' ability to do business or help protect the health and safety of Alberta families and workers, so I cannot support this bill.

We know that we have the best businesses in this country, and that's why we're listening to them to make sure that Alberta continues to be the best place to do business. I'm proud of the work that our government has been doing to ensure that we create a more resilient, diversified economy. Our government is committed to working with businesses to make it actually easier for them to create jobs and get Albertans back to work, which is why we have done things like creating a Department of Economic Development and Trade. It acts as a one-stop shop that breaks down barriers and silos that existed under the previous government.

As part of phase 1 of the agencies, boards, and commissions review we have also done an amalgamation of 11 agencies, boards, and commissions and dissolved 15 more, creating efficiencies and saving \$33 million over the next three years. Also as part of the review we have created a single, nimble Alberta Innovates to ensure that our research and innovation system is more agile and help ensure that every research dollar is wisely invested. One of those examples is within my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, where we have the Vegreville location of Alberta Innovates, which I'm quite proud to represent.

4:50

We understand the role that businesses play in the province's long-term economic outlook while enhancing Albertans' quality of life and making life affordable for Alberta communities and families, which is why our government is committed to working with businesses to actually make it easier for them to create jobs and get Albertans back to work. I'm proud of the work that the government has done to make sure that good jobs also stay in Alberta.

In fact, some of Canada's most respected economic forecasts from our experts have been forecasting that our province will lead the country in economic growth for the next two years. This summer RBC had pegged GDP growth at 4.2 per cent this year, which is far higher than Alberta's average growth rate over the last 10 years, roughly, between 2005 and 2015, of only 2.6 per cent. The reports have also cited our historic infrastructure build as being part of the reason why we have continued to maintain jobs and increase investor confidence. That has also come with the approval of two pipelines as contributing factors to our economic recovery.

Albertans have no control, Madam Speaker, over world oil prices, but strategic investments from government and industry have helped cushion the blow and stimulate growth in our province. We saw 49,000 more jobs in our province this summer than in the summer last year, in 2016, and we continue to have the highest employment rate in the country and the highest weekly earnings.

I am very proud of the work that our Minister of Economic Development and Trade has been doing to ensure that businesses succeed within this province. The CFIB presented our hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade with the golden scissors award. It was to recognize the work that had been done on the Canadian free trade agreement, which also was quoted as helping eradicate red tape on Canada's small businesses. As noted by the CFIB, the Canadian free trade agreement was "a major step towards resolving often conflicting rules and regulations across provinces," so I want to thank the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade for having the backs of Albertan businesses and ensuring that they have the best landscape to succeed.

We also know that regulations do play an incredibly important role in protecting the health and safety of Alberta families and workers. Regulations help ensure that businesses compete on a level playing field, Madam Speaker, and ensure that clients and customers get a fair deal. One-for-one rules are overly simplistic because the number of individual regulations doesn't correlate with the burden imposed by regulations. One could easily create five

new regulations that have minimal administrative costs or one new regulation that is extremely onerous to comply with.

The bill proposed by the hon. member doesn't address the specificity that is needed when we look at each regulation that we have in the province. It doesn't address that need. For example, if the government created a new environmental regulation, would the bill necessitate the removal of another environmental regulation or a regulation from any field? It's important to ask what constitutes a new regulation that needs to be offset. What's most important, Madam Speaker, is that regulations are easily understood by a business, not just that they are at random created or gotten rid of. Some regulations could be needed to include agency guidance and to help clarify earlier regulations or to assist businesses. Other regulations might include enforcement policies, interpretations, directives, memoranda, or a number of other things.

Again, what the bill does is lack the specificity that is needed. One-for-one rules create more work for regulators, and they actually slow down the work that our departments do. It tries to reduce the number of regulations but really only makes things more dense and more complex. As I was mentioning earlier, it's more important to have easily understood regulations than to just look solely at what the numbers are. In addition, having to identify regulations to eliminate and perform comparative CBAs for each existing regulation versus the proposed new regulation is extremely time intensive and is not a good use of the time of those that work in our departments.

Let me reiterate that enforcing a one-for-one rule increases bureaucratic inefficiency and lag time because policy-makers need to spend that time that they could be doing other work identifying regulations to repeal and replace as well as drafting new policy. What they need to do is just to focus on making good policy and reviewing that which is already in place as regulations come up for review as necessitated.

A one-for-one rule would make it more difficult to co-ordinate our regulatory regime with that of other jurisdictions and, therefore, complicates trade for Alberta companies. Now is really a time when Alberta companies are concentrating on how they expand their exports, not to make it more difficult on our companies that are trying to do that work.

For example, if an Alberta small or medium-sized enterprise wants to access another market within Canada or internationally, it needs to comply with foreign regulations before it can export. This is one of the reasons why streamlining Alberta regulations with other jurisdictions simplifies this process for businesses. A one-for-one rule would hamper the ability of public agencies to create regulations.

I want to make it absolutely clear that reducing regulations, whether they're environmental, financial, or otherwise, can expose the public and the environment to risk, and our government remains committed to mitigating public risk and having a strong oversight system in place. While we understand that regulations and bureaucracy might be frustrating at some times, they exist to protect the public, to protect workers, to protect the environment, and really to protect business from unnecessary risk.

Madam Speaker, while I can't support this bill, if the opposition has examples of existing regulations that they believe should be removed, I know that I can work with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to address those on an ongoing basis, to actually get down to the root causes of what the opposition may identify as some issues, so that we're not just doing so in an arbitrary way but doing so with an actual eye to identifying what could be some real issues to make it easier for Alberta businesses to be able to perform better and be able to support them in their success.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. With that, I will conclude my remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to bring up a couple of points with respect to the member's identifying of the one-for-one. Actually, some of the things that the member had said are why one-for-one would be necessary. When you identify where there are issues with respect to red tape, if we're talking about small business or many other things that you were actually speaking about, the whole point of having one-for-one is to go back and identify what wasn't working and what is going to work in order to create policy that actually is better and is more efficient and actually creates the space for businesses to be able to move forward.

Something that we've seen pretty regularly throughout my life anyway in small business is that you think you understand the regulations, you think you understand the concept, you put together the proposal, you do all of those things, and then the regulations change. But the regulations don't reflect changing anything in the old things that you've already accomplished. It just adds and continues the burden of red tape onto the process that you're already part of.

I believe that if I was to understand correctly what the one-for-one means, that's what it is. It's about not continuing to add a burden to what already exists. It's about being efficient, looking at the process as it stands and fixing it. Actually, the member had mentioned the review process. That's exactly . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but the time allotted for this portion of business has now concluded.

Motions Other than Government Motions

World Interfaith Harmony Week

508. Ms Kazim moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize the first week of February as World Interfaith Harmony Week in support of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 65/5.

[Debate adjourned October 30: Ms Woollard speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, you still had some speaking time remaining on this motion. Did you wish to continue to use that time?

Ms Woollard: I have nothing more to say at the moment. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

5:00

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise tonight and speak to Motion 508, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, the motion being: be it resolved that the Legislature of Alberta urge the government to declare the first week of February beginning in 2018 to be the annual United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week. Indeed, I am a great believer in interfaith work. I've seen many great examples of this happen here in our city. In my work with EndPoverty Edmonton, sitting on the stewardship round-table on behalf of the Ministry of Community and Social Services – the chair of that committee is Bishop Jane Alexander. She is a woman who

is greatly respected here in our community – she was recently honoured at the University of Alberta – one who has made great contributions to the issues of poverty here in our city. I know that she works with many across various faith groups in her work to address this.

In fact, just about a month ago, Madam Speaker, or just over a month ago we had an incident here in my community in Edmonton-Centre where a gentleman took a vehicle, he struck a police officer, and then went on a wild ride through the downtown streets. He struck several individuals. Thankfully, the Edmonton Police Service was incredibly professional and incredibly quick in their response. They prevented any loss of life, and they helped reduce the number of injuries. The next day I had the opportunity to join with many down at Churchill Square in front of city hall, and I stood on stage with the Premier, with members of the opposition, with members of all political parties and all levels of government, and with leaders of all faith communities in our city. We stood together on that day, and we declared that we would not be divided, that we would not let the actions of a single individual change how we choose to live our lives, how we choose to interact in our communities, and that we would not allow that to drive us to hate or prejudice against any others.

That is the spirit, Madam Speaker, of this motion, acknowledging that faith communities all have much in common. They all share core beliefs of human decency, of supporting each other, of being there for each other in our communities, of the principles of working to help those who are not always able to help themselves, looking after the less fortunate, working together to make our communities better places. We have much more in common than we have dividing us.

I know that I have constituents from a multitude of faiths. I've had the opportunity to spend time with the Jewish community here in my constituency. I've had the opportunity to spend time with many of the Muslim communities here in Edmonton. In fact, on Friday night I just had the opportunity to attend the opening of the green room, which is a youth outreach program through Islamic Family and Social Services, IFSSA, here in Edmonton. They do some fantastic work, and the green room is an excellent youth outreach program that they have. Just one block away from my constituency office they've now opened the new location of the green room and, indeed, a new central office for IFSSA. They're doing wonderful work in the community. I know oftentimes when I've been dealing with other issues, with other communities, I can approach the folks at IFSSA and they're willing to reach out and they're willing to help and support and offer whatever resources and goodwill they have to help others.

I know there are many communities across this city that are the same. Indeed, Madam Speaker, the Christian community, which I myself grew up in – it's not a faith that I continue to hold but is one that has deeply, deeply informed how I choose to live my life, what I believe about leadership, and it is the reason I stand on this side of the House today and why I chose to run with the Alberta NDP. These social values that I learned through that faith in my upbringing informed my belief that we need to be supporting people and that we need to be providing the supports and services that people need.

I'm very happy to support this motion to ensure that we take that opportunity every year to recognize and celebrate and support all of our faith communities and look for further opportunities by which we can come together to celebrate what we have in common and the good work that we can do together. It was probably just about a year ago that I was invited to come and bring greetings on behalf of the government of Alberta at an interfaith conference that was put on by several people here in the community. That was a wonderful opportunity as well, Madam Speaker, to sit down and just learn

more about some of the other faith practices, to learn about some of their beliefs and, again, some of the things that we have in common, the many things we share, how we can collaborate, and to take apart some of the prejudices that may exist around some beliefs and some faiths.

I think it's very important for us to continue to encourage good dialogue between our faith communities, to look for opportunities on how we can work together, how we can continue to support much of the good work that each of these communities is doing separately in the community, and also then look at how we can work together to multiply that good work through collaboration.

I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for bringing this motion forward, and I look forward to voting in favour along with my other colleagues here in the House.

Thank you.

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that very much. I'm pleased to rise on the Motion 508, which states: "be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize the first week of February as World Interfaith Harmony Week in support of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 65/5."

Now, this is a motion that is worthy of debate here and one that I am very much in support of. The faith communities contribute a great deal to our society, and there was a time, I suppose not that many decades ago, that the faith communities were largely responsible for delivering what we now call social services. It's not as much the case anymore. They still deliver a lot of social services today, up to and including today, but there was a time when governments didn't provide the level of social services that they do now. It was very much left to and largely embraced by the different faith communities to look after people, and that spirit of social service and looking after each other still exists today and lives on today.

The idea of having harmony between those faith communities is very important, which is another reason to support this bill. I've been blessed during my time in public life to have been involved with social events and even public service events with just about every faith community that I know of in Alberta. I have to tell you, what they have in common is probably bigger and more important than what they hold differently. There's been a pretty consistent belief, in my estimation, or pretty consistent, even though there is difference in their beliefs – what I see as consistent is the belief in helping the weakest and the poorest amongst us. The willingness and the desire to provide support when someone is in a time of stress or they have a mental health issue or a time where perhaps there is a sickness or a death in the family or amongst loved ones – faith communities gather around their own.

But more than that, they gather around those that aren't their own when they can, too, and provide support for them just because they need it. In my view, that's a standard that is important and a

standard that makes our society better. I'm cognizant of the fact that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would now invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore to close debate on Motion 508.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all the members of the House for the debate here today. You know, I'm proud to be part of a government that is making life better for Albertans and that has in its heart to build a community where people feel safe and free to live their faith and culture. The declaration of an annual United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week would solidify our government's support of diversity in culture and faith. By proposing this motion, my hope is that every community across this province has the opportunity to live without fear when it comes to their faith.

5:10

Madam Speaker, I believe that it is our job as elected representatives to make life more inclusive for all Albertans, and this is why I'm standing here today. I'm advocating on behalf of all my constituents and Albertans of various religious backgrounds. I believe that it is our duty as members of this Legislature to support diversity in this province.

As stated on the United Nations website for interfaith, "the World Interfaith Harmony Week provides a platform – one week in a year – when all interfaith groups and other groups of goodwill can show the world what a powerful movement they are." This week would be "a focal point from which all people of goodwill can recognize that the common values they hold far outweigh the differences they have, and thus provide a strong dosage of peace and harmony to their communities."

With that, Madam Speaker, I encourage all members of this Legislature to support this motion and set the goal for ourselves to celebrate interfaith in our communities and across Alberta.

Thank you very much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Cortes-Vargas: Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

The Deputy Speaker: Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: That's okay. I think she's done that a few times, too.

Seeing the time and the progress, I move that we call it 6 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:12 p.m.]

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