



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 7, 2017

Day 50

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
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)
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
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Official Opposition House Leader
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Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
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Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
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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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Kazim	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the ambassador of Ireland to Canada, His Excellency Jim Kelly.

Our province's bond with Ireland is long standing, with nearly 540,000 Albertans of Irish ancestry. His Excellency's visit has allowed us to explore opportunities for Alberta and Ireland to grow our relationships in many areas. With opportunities emerging in fast-growing sectors like clean tech, life sciences, and information and communications technology, there is potential to expand not only trade but to form partnerships in areas like education and research. We look forward to working with His Excellency on expanding and strengthening our relationship with Ireland.

I now ask the ambassador to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to stand and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature a group of grade 9 students from SML academy in Stony Plain and their teacher, Mrs. Vanessa Hamilton. I had a chance to meet briefly with them, and they asked what my most important job is in the Legislature. I said that my job is to advocate for our communities and the people that live there. I'm really proud to have them here today, and if they would stand up, we could all give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ardrossan elementary school. I think they're all over the two galleries. I'd just ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. I welcome also Miss Tara Kammerer, Karson Campbell, Richelle Kryz, and all the parents accompanying them. They've been an absolute pleasure to work with and to go visit. Please give them a warm hand.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House an executive group with the International Association of Fire Fighters. This group in particular are the best looking and the most charming of them all. These are everyday people with a purpose and passion for the work and the people and community they serve. I'm pleased to introduce through you six such individuals from the Fort McMurray fire

department who I'd ask to please rise as I say their names: Robert Van Hecke, Patrick Duggan, David Maki, Ryan Pitchers, Hunter Langpap, and a new guy I don't know, Curtis Robinson. Please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: You must well appreciate that the Fort McMurray firefighters have a special place in this House. Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four guests today on behalf of the Minister of Finance. I ask them to rise as I call their names: Greg Pollock, who is the CEO of Advocis; Rob McCullagh and Kelly Smith, co-chairs of the provincial advisory committee; and Wade Baldwin, past chair of the Advocis board of directors. Advocis counts more than 12,000 members Canada-wide across 40 chapters. They're the oldest and largest membership association of financial advisers and planners in the country. I ask that they now receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce some of Alberta's perioperative nurses. This week we celebrate Perioperative Nurses Week. These nurses specialize in the care of patients immediately before, during, and after surgery, and we know that they are vital members of patient-centred, team-based care. I now ask these guests, who are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker – Barbara Mushayandebvu, Rana Sleiman, and Darlene Rikley – to rise and receive our traditional warm welcome and the appreciation of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce a number of bright young people who are seated in your gallery today, the members of the Council of Alberta University Students, one of whom you know very well as she worked in your office for a year. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly these outstanding young leaders.

CAUS represents the interests of more than a hundred thousand university students from the universities of Alberta, Calgary, Mount Royal, MacEwan, and Lethbridge. I've gotten to know these students over the summer, and I'm looking forward to continuing to work with them to make life better for all of Alberta's university students.

I ask them to rise as I introduce them. With us today we have Reed Larsen, Conner Peta, Marina Banister, Hailey Babb, Aria Burrell, Stephanie Nedoshytko, Branden Cave, Puncham Judge as well as Josh McKeown, who is going to be working for the Department of Advanced Education in the very near future. I'm excited to have him onboard. I ask the members of the Assembly to give them all a traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. It's my absolute pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you one of the huge champions in my life. You know, Mr. Speaker, that in this arena and this business there are only a few people who continue to stand by us through the ups and downs no matter what circumstances life throws at you. This is one of those people, whether he was protecting me from my little brother or beating me as my big brother. It's my absolute

pleasure to introduce to you – I invite him to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly – my brother Jeremy Cooper.

The Speaker: Welcome, big brother.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if I can compete with our Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo in introducing these fine gentlemen that I'm going to present next. These are firefighters from my constituency of Chestermere-Rocky View. If I could please have Glenn Jefferies, Jeff Salkeld, Bill Wohl, and Chad Peacock stand to receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House members of Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada. A delegation of over 40 small-business financial advisers are holding meetings at the Legislature today. For more than 100 years Advocis members have delivered financial security and peace of mind through high ethical and professional standards. Advocis is also having their reception this evening at the Royal Glenora Club. I look forward to seeing all my colleagues there. My guests are seated in the public gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Affordable Child Care

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about one of the most important initiatives launched by this government, affordable, \$25-a-day child care. When I meet with parents of Calgary-Currie on their doorsteps, at community events, and at the grocery store, this is the most popular question they ask. In fact, just last week I met a mother in Rosscarrock who told me she paid \$65 a day and was forced to decide whether she could afford to go back to work and place her child in care. She could not, and she is not alone.

1:40

All across this province child care is one of the single largest expenses families have. According to a 2016 study the average fees in Calgary for infant care are about \$50 a day. Parents with toddlers saw their fees go up by 12 per cent between 2014 and 2016. Not only is child care expensive, but 60 per cent of all Calgary child care centres have wait-lists, and this is a program that creates much-needed spaces. To date Alberta's new \$25-a-day child care initiative is funding approximately 1,300 licensed child care spaces; 714 of these are new. And for those vulnerable families working shift work or multiple jobs, a portion of these child care centres are available outside the normal hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Mr. Speaker.

It is also creating jobs, jobs for those MRU students that Minister Larivee and I met last week who are passionate about early learning and child and youth care. Because of this program approximately 120 new child care staff have been hired to support these new spaces and additional enrolment. For families, this program means that an estimated 357 Albertans can re-enter the workforce. There is no question that Alberta's new \$25-a-day early learning and child care centres are making life better and more affordable for families

across the province every single day, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Calgary-Currie want to see even more of them.

The Speaker: Hon. members, with your permission I would ask for unanimous consent for acknowledgement of guests who are with us today if you would be prepared to consider that.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, for indulging me. It's my absolute honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly actually the best firefighters in this province – they are from Airdrie – I would like to say a friend of mine, Mr. Matt Elgie, and Trevor Breitenbucher. I want to call you Trevor B. because there's no way I can pronounce this name. I had the honour and pleasure of attending a firefighter training session with the members of the Airdrie fire department and the Calgary fire department, and I got an insight into the dangers that they face and the hard work that they do for each and every one of us so selflessly. We thank them for that. With that, would you please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Alberta Fire Fighters Association. We have with us today the president of the AFFA, Craig Macdonald, as well as fellow executives Brad Readman, Brent Shelton, and Jason Curry. The Alberta Fire Fighters Association represents thousands of firefighters across the province. They are committed, passionate, principled, and they have advocated for decades to ensure that firefighters have a strong voice in protecting the advancement of fire services in Alberta and ensuring that our firefighters remain safe on and off the job. I would like to thank them for everything that they do and for the work that they do to advocate for their members, their ongoing work for the safety and health of their members. I would like to ask them and all members of the AFFA who are in our House today to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you from the House.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Soviet Communism

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago the Bolshevik revolution unleashed a reign of terror that echoes through history. The Soviet communist regime, installed by the Bolsheviks in 1917, went on to oppress hundreds of millions behind the Iron Curtain during seven decades of brutal political violence. From Lenin's famine of 1921 to constant purges and deportations, from the genocidal Holodomor in Ukraine to concentration camps of the gulag, Soviet communism brought death and destruction to some 20 million people. My own family suffered from this communist terror, fleeing from almost certain slaughter and leaving behind all worldly possessions as refugees from Lenin's dictatorship of the proletariat, my father only 10 years old and the eldest of five children at the time.

The communist ideology that came to power on this day in 1917 went on to imprison most of eastern and central Europe. For example, this week we mark the anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian uprising, when the democratic dreams of brave Hungarians were crushed by Soviet tanks; Polish Independence Day, when we celebrate the freedom of a nation that suffered decades of communist oppression; and the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, when Germans brought down the Iron Curtain.

Mr. Speaker, these and other crimes are detailed in *The Black Book of Communism*, in which leading historians estimate that communist regimes are responsible for the deaths of some 94 million people from Katyn to the killing fields of Cambodia, from Mao's great leap forward to the North Korean concentration camps. So today I ask all members and Albertans to pause and reflect on these innocent victims, most of whom lie in forgotten and unmarked graves. In remembering them, we regret that most of their oppressors were never brought to justice and that today some of the symbols of this evil ideology are considered fashionable, with apologists continuing to deny or diminish crimes against humanity.

We are grateful for Canada being a refuge for so many victims of communism like my own family, and we rededicate ourselves to being forever vigilant in the defence of freedom and human dignity.

Thank you.

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

New Red Deer College Green Energy Residence

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to celebrate the announcement that Red Deer College will be making a \$19 million investment into a new main campus residence. The five-storey, 145-unit facility will provide increased space for more students to live and study on campus. It will only be footsteps away from the brand new Gary W. Harris Canada Games Centre, giving students access to state-of-the-art recreational and fitness facilities. I'm pleased to note that the first floor of the residence will be barrier free, providing accessible housing to those with mobility issues.

Also, this building will be an impressive example of alternative energy investment. The use of solar panels covering the east, west, and south facades will reduce both utility costs and their carbon footprint. More impressively, the college will use this technology for training and education purposes, linking this to the development of an alternative energy lab. Giving students the opportunity to learn about alternative energy resources in a period of increased energy diversification is a strong investment into the future of RDC, their students, and the energy industry in this province.

This investment into the facilities available to students in Red Deer and central Alberta is a sign that Red Deer College is succeeding in their goal of being a world-class postsecondary institution. I thank RDC for their commitment to this project and environmental stewardship and commend them on their pursuit of making Alberta and Red Deer places that students will more readily call home.

Thank you.

Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, a government running deficits and debt cannot continue to be a compassionate and caring government, but the one with a balanced budget can be. Through developing our God-given natural resources, we can grow prosperity to balance those budgets. As per the Premier's own royalty review expert, Peter Tertzakian, demand for oil is not going anywhere but up. The global market for Alberta's oil does indeed look good. OPEC sees more global demand despite electric cars, rising to 102.3 million

barrels per day in 2022 and trillions of dollars of investment in upstream.

Meanwhile the environmentalists who stand in the way of pipelines: someone, somewhere is their sugar daddy, bankrolling these hysterical ideologues against Alberta. But it is the environmentalists who are getting played. The commercial interests of the U.S.A. have played the environmentalists for the fools they are, hiring protestors for peanuts while making off with billions from Alberta's exports. Alberta's oil continues to flow south to the United States at a discounted price. Meanwhile the U.S.A. exports homemade shale oil at market prices at a rapidly expanding rate and no longer needs to buy as much Canadian oil.

1:50

The bought-and-paid-for environmentalists have done a real disservice to Canada for a paycheque. Canada had a chance to achieve energy independence, to stop importing oil from brutal dictators. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce estimates a \$50 million a day loss to Canada due to lack of global market access for our oil. Common sense would say to build more pipelines in all directions. But, sadly, environmentalists have chosen more oil by rail rolling through the communities near . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Oral Question Period

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

Pipeline Approval and Construction

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we are pleased that the Premier has taken our advice to go outside Alberta's borders and defend our energy industry. The Hon. Jason Kenney has been pitching this idea for well over a year. Again, we lead; they follow. Trans Mountain received paper regulatory approval nearly a year ago, but aside from a very low-profile and nearly silent trip to B.C. last December, the Premier failed to defend pipelines outside of Alberta's borders even as opposition to them continued to grow. Will the Premier admit that she's been too passive on this issue and that it's time to finally stand up all the way for Alberta's pipelines?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the opportunity to talk about what our government has done to promote pipelines and to get pipelines approved. From pretty much the minute we were first elected, we started working with industry not only on the climate leadership plan but also on the royalty review. Almost immediately we started talking to our friends in Ottawa, particularly once we had an election and there was a new group of people in Ottawa, about the need for getting our product to tidewater. That work resulted in the Kinder Morgan pipeline being approved by the federal government, and we're very . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can't be surprised about the opposition to Trans Mountain in B.C. After all, her government appointed two of the ringleaders against it, Karen Mahon and Tzaporah Berman, to her oil sands advisory group. Last December the Premier had dinner with her old friend, the B.C. opposition leader at the time, John Horgan, who now happens to be the B.C. NDP Premier. About that dinner Horgan said that she, the Premier

of Alberta, had no intention of persuading him on pipelines. Shame. Will the Premier admit that it was a mistake not to try to sell the merits of ethical Alberta oil to her old comrade of 10 years?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I will admit to is taking every opportunity to speak to people not only in Alberta, of course, but in B.C. and across the country about the importance of getting our product to tidewater and how that is important for building our economy. I am glad that that message is getting through, and I'm also glad that our economy is going to lead the growth in the country this year because of the work that we are doing. I am glad that jobs are coming back to Alberta because of the work that we are doing. I am glad that manufacturing is up in Alberta because of the work that we are doing. I am very proud of our . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Jason Kenney got four pipelines built during his time in government. All this Premier has is two cancelled pipelines and a so-called promise from Justin Trudeau. We know that the NDP like to tout their chief ally Trudeau because he granted paper approval to the Trans Mountain pipeline. The strange thing is that Trudeau never promotes the merits of Alberta oil when he's actually in British Columbia, but he will say while in other parts of the country: phasing out our oil sands. Will the Premier tell her good friend Justin Trudeau that it's time to step out and vocally defend Trans Mountain when he's in British Columbia?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that with a Conservative government here in Alberta and a Conservative government in Ottawa, they didn't manage to get one pipeline built to tidewater. They didn't even manage to get one finally approved. We have a different record. We are making progress. We are standing up for the energy industry. We are going to make sure that this job gets done because that's what we committed to, and we are very proud of that.

Mr. McIver: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.
Second main question.

Mr. Nixon: Four pipelines by Jason Kenney; none by this government.

Federal Equalization Payments

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, Canada's current equalization formula expires in early 2019. Critical talks should begin as soon as possible given the urgency of the situation and the federal government's and other provincial leaders' sustained attacks on the primary source of Alberta's income and wealth, our energy sector. Will the Premier adopt Jason Kenney's lead and take an aggressive stance on renegotiation and inform this House of what her government's plans are to stand up for Albertans when it comes to equalization?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, given that it was the members opposite, their friends, leaders, and donors who negotiated the current formula that they don't like, I'm really quite perplexed by the fact that they are so keen on fighting it now. [interjection] But, of course, we will continue to stand up for Alberta. We will continue to work with the federal government to get more money to Albertans. [interjection] We got changes to employment insurance on behalf of Albertans. We got money for the orphan wells fund on behalf of Albertans. We have been

working to get more infrastructure money on behalf of Albertans. We are continuing . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, I kept hearing your voice. It couldn't be you.

Mr. Nixon: Much of Canada appears to love the fruits of Alberta's resource sector while simultaneously blocking market access to those same resources. The Trudeau Liberals outright killed one pipeline, Northern Gateway, and at the behest of Quebec politicians they changed policy to scuttle Energy East. The Premier has the nerve to stand in this House and continue to say that she has gotten pipelines approved when in reality all she has is cancelled pipelines and a piece of paper from Justin Trudeau. I'll let Albertans decide what they think that is worth. The question, though, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is: will she support a joint resolution from this House to adopt an aggressive stance to renegotiate equalization?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the members opposite and their leader had decades to do something on the equalization file, but instead they sat on their hands when they were in Ottawa, absolutely sat on their hands, just like they did when it came to fighting for pipelines. [interjections] In fact, they got no pipelines to tidewater. Pipelines get built every day through this country, but pipelines to tidewater do not, certainly, under the Conservatives, only under us. [interjections] Thank goodness we're the ones in charge now.

The Speaker: Come on, folks. Keep it down.

Mr. Nixon: My leader spent the last 18 months travelling this province defending Albertans on equalization while this Premier has sat at home doing nothing. Again and again this Premier and this NDP government refuse to vocally criticize their federal allies, be it on carbon tax, small-business tax hikes, or changes to the rules for pipeline approvals. Albertans are extremely concerned that the Trudeau Liberals will use equalization to take even more money out of the pockets of hard-working Albertans. Will the Premier stand with us and support a joint resolution calling for an aggressive renegotiation of the equalization formula and stand up for Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we might be interested in a resolution to ask an aggressive question about why it was that the Conservatives and Jason Kenney, when he was in cabinet, didn't fix this problem when they had all the time in the world to do it. What's happening now is that the members opposite are engaging in cheap political stunts over an issue that they had years and years and years to fix and couldn't be bothered to deal with. The fact of the matter is that we are working collaboratively with the federal government to get infrastructure money, to get EI money, to get orphan wells money, and we are not done because we are standing up for Alberta.

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

Provincial By-election

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, late last week the Premier's office told the media that a by-election would be called, quote, without undue delay, but yesterday the Premier in answer to a question to me would only say that she would call an election "in due course." To the Premier. I sincerely and I politely ask you: will you call an

election so that the Hon. Jason Kenney has the opportunity to join us here in this House? Yes or no?

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member opposite that I absolutely intend to call a by-election.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this is not just a nice favour that we are asking for. There's a long-standing constitutional convention that the Premier should call a by-election at the earliest opportunity so that a new Leader of the Opposition can take his or her seat here in this House. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed resigned a week ago, and his seat sits empty. I ask again: when will the Premier call a by-election so that the Hon. Jason Kenney can join us in this House?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it is interesting. The last time that the members opposite were in the position of calling a by-election, they waited anywhere from three weeks to six months. Suddenly, when it's our turn to call a by-election, it has to happen three days later. Now, that's not new for them because, of course, there's one set of rules for them and a completely different set of rules for us. The fact of the matter is that people have to have an opportunity to get ready for the by-election and ensure that all parties can participate, and we will make sure that happens.

Mr. Nixon: It's quite clear that the NDP are very eager to debate the Hon. Jason Kenney. I look forward to watching that personally, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you do, too. Yesterday the Premier said, "I can't wait," so what is the Premier waiting for? Why doesn't she walk down the hall right now or pick up the phone, call the Lieutenant Governor, and call a by-election so that the Hon. Jason Kenney can come and take his seat in this House?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we will call a by-election in due course.

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

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opponents

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Getting Alberta's energy products to tidewater in the most economic and environmentally responsible manner should be the number one priority for this government. It's their job to make the case for pipelines, but despite the supposed social licence that comes from this government's climate policy, we're still facing strong opposition. To the Premier: if you've done all you can to sell pipelines, why does Alberta still face strong opposition in B.C. and beyond?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said a number of times before, our government continues to work very hard to support the pipeline to tidewater. First of all, we brought in a climate leadership plan, which the federal government clearly identified as the reason why the pipeline was approved. Since then we have worked on a number of different levels, legal as well as political as well as communications, to promote the pipeline. We will continue to do that. I know that the members opposite wring their hands with glee at the hope that maybe the pipeline will fail, but – you know what? – mark my words; it will be built.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the UCP may cheer against Alberta, but I never will.

Now, I hear a lot about the economic benefits of pipelines, and there is no doubt that there's an airtight case that Alberta, B.C., and all of Canada benefit economically from pipelines. But there's environmental benefit as well, and that is where this NDP government has let us down. Again to the Premier: it is amazing that I have to ask this question, but do you know that there's a significant environmental benefit to building a pipeline to tidewater because it reduces overall global carbon emissions by displacing higher carbon crude from places like Venezuela and Nigeria?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member opposite for the mansplaining opportunity. Let me just say that I am quite familiar with the file and, in fact, have made the case for the file from both an environmental point of view as well as an economic point of view in a number of different forums across the country because I know that it is good for Canadians both from an economic point of view and an environmental point of view and, in particular, with respect to the job creation that we know is important to Albertans, to British Columbians, and to all Canadians.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's energy industry is the most innovative and environmentally responsible anywhere in the world. Whether it's paraffinic froth treatment in oil sands mining or microwaves, solvent, or fire flood in SAGD or the many other technologies under development, it's Alberta innovations that will make oil sands' production carbon neutral or better. We are not the UCP; the Alberta Party does not deny man-made climate change. To the Premier: why are you not telling pipeline opponents that Alberta crude will actually reduce global carbon emissions?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that the member opposite read the speech that I delivered about an hour and a half ago because the answer is: we do.

Thank you.

Hospital Construction in Edmonton and Calgary

Dr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, yesterday my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-South West detailed the rapid growth in the southwest quadrant of Edmonton in his question about the need for a new high school. Thousands of young families have moved into the area, and along with new schools we desperately need a new hospital. In Edmonton-Whitemud, in addition to a burgeoning population, there are several seniors' facilities. These citizens are very much looking forward to having a hospital close by. To the Minister of Health: could you please update the House on the status of the first new hospital to be built in the city of Edmonton in 30 years?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much to the member for the very important question. It's true that it's been over a generation since Edmonton got a new hospital under the former government, but guess what, Mr. Speaker? Things are looking up. Alberta is doing better, and under this government we are building a new hospital in southwest Edmonton. Over the coming months we'll be engaging with stakeholders and working with the city of Edmonton to ensure that access roads, public transit, and services are in place, and I look forward to updating this House about this important project.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much for that, Mr. Speaker. My constituents will be very excited to learn of this. Given that the Misericordia hospital provides urgent care to thousands of my constituents yearly, can the Minister of Health please provide an update on the progress of the expanded ER facility at the Misericordia?

Ms Hoffman: I'm honoured to do so, Mr. Speaker. When massive cuts are made to a health care system, like those proposed by Jason Kenney and the members opposite, critical facilities like the Misericordia hospital suffer. We won't do that. This government was elected to protect the things that matter to Albertans, like health care and education. The new emergency department at the Misericordia will be a part of this new expanded space built on the west side of the building. I'm so proud to be investing in Alberta instead of cutting like Jason Kenney and the opposition.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Turner: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that a new Calgary cancer centre has been asked for by my oncologist colleagues in the Alberta cancer program and by cancer patients across this province for years, can the same minister update the House on progress made in meeting these requests and the anticipated timeline for that project?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very proud to stand with the Premier and the Minister of Infrastructure and many other government members on the Calgary cancer centre site. After more than a decade of being told that it was happening, not happening, maybe it would happen somewhere else, oh, maybe it won't happen at all, maybe it'll be \$9 billion of cuts, Alberta elected a new government. This government is moving forward with this important project and the 1,500 mortgage-paying jobs that it brings as well. Construction will continue until 2022, and we plan on doing a very public opening in 2023.

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

Health Care Costs

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to a CIHI report Alberta now has the distinction of spending more money than any other province on health care, yet our wait times and outcomes are not better. Dangerous emergency and surgical waits add suffering and cost, and many Albertans continue to languish in hospital beds, up to 25 per cent in one Calgary hospital, instead of in the community. Cuts to injury prevention and early intervention for addictions and mental health have not helped. To the minister: can the Minister of Health tell us where the money is going if not to improving health care?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much to the member for the important question. Mr. Speaker, there are three main drivers in Alberta and, frankly, across Canada in terms of health care system costs. Those are hospitals, where we're working to move more care into the community, as the member noted, including building 2,000 badly needed long-term care and dementia spaces; drug costs, which have been seeing pressures across this province – and, certainly, a 20 per cent cut to drugs would only hurt the Albertans who indeed need them – as well as physician costs. We're proud that we renegotiated an amending agreement and will continue to work with physicians, with drug companies, and with front-line health care workers to bend the cost curve.

2:10

Dr. Swann: Well, Mr. Speaker, after two years of trying, things are no better than they were under the PCs when it comes to reducing wait times. AHS performance data shows that Alberta continues to fail in continuing care placement, emergency lengths of stay, and mental health access. These delays in care are costing billions and result in poorer health. Again to the minister: how long before we see an integrated preventive management primary care system that deals with severe, complex cases, that consume over 50 per cent of the health care budget?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. I'm very proud of the fact that we've worked with physicians and with the primary care networks to come up with a new governance model, that I do believe will improve outcomes for patients, as well as of doing it in partnership with those who are closest to the patient in driving the system.

In terms of what they refer to as unacceptable wait times, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that we're working to reduce wait times. For example, our hip fracture repair and radiation therapy and our 17 stroke treatment centres are now among the fastest in the world, and that's not something to diminish.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, a whopping \$5 billion of the \$21.5 billion this government spends on health care goes directly to physician services. That's an 8 per cent higher proportion than the rest of the country. Despite claims of holding the line on spending, the government ultimately caves in during contract negotiations with physicians and AHS senior management. Alberta's numbers are clearly out of line with the rest of the country. When will the minister follow the lead of Ontario and try to drive down these costs by freezing and, in some cases, rolling back the highest salaries of physicians and senior managers?

Ms Hoffman: That certainly is an interesting proposal, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be working with the front-line care providers, including those who are providing services as physicians. It's true that contracts were signed under the former government that saw what some might say are skyrocketing increases to that line item. When we came into government, we sat down with physicians, and we negotiated an amending agreement that resulted in up to half a billion dollars going back into the pockets of Albertans and the taxpayers of this province. I'm proud of that. That is significant. There is more work to be done. Trust me; it will be done.

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

Catholic School Sex Education Curriculum

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister can't seem to help himself. The Official Opposition and multiple media outlets pointed out that the documents presented by the Catholic school superintendents clearly state, "We support teaching about legal consent" and "consent is always necessary." Even with this information the minister, instead of issuing a long-overdue apology, doubled down yesterday and claimed that Catholic schools were taking exception to teaching consent. To the Minister of Education: do you really believe that Catholic schools intend to teach and promote marital rape? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, neither myself nor the Premier said any such thing, and to suggest it is simply trying to score political points.

We work very closely with the Catholic school boards in all ways. We've never built more Catholic schools than we have under this government, for example. We've never had a closer relationship with Catholic school boards in terms of building curriculum. Certainly, we know that we're working closely together with our Catholic partners to ensure that we build a comprehensive health and wellness program that works for all of our children that we are responsible for.

Mr. McIver: Well, until this week I'd never heard the church complain about a government, which they did this last Sunday across the pulpit.

Given that the *Calgary Herald* wrote an editorial about Catholic sex ed and that they make it clear that consent is a core part of the curriculum, again to the minister: why do you and the Premier continue to smear all Catholics in Alberta by accusing them of promoting and teaching marital rape?

Mr. Eggen: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member is just trying to score cheap political points for the sake of I don't know what advantage.

We work closely with Catholic school boards. We work closely with Catholic superintendents and parents and schools to ensure that we build a curriculum that works for all students. We had exception with a single submission, that was FOIPed, from the superintendents. We rejected that submission. But we're working together with Catholic school boards to ensure that we build curriculum, we're building Catholic schools, and we're building trust and goodwill as opposed to that divisive sort of language.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, a letter signed by all the bishops in Alberta is hardly cheap.

Given that all politicians make mistakes, nonetheless – no one is perfect – and given that when this happens, the right thing to do is apologize and make amends and take advantage of the Catholic tenet of forgiveness, to the minister: will you do the right thing and issue an apology to Alberta's Catholic community, or will you let your repulsive comments stand uncorrected?

Mr. Eggen: Well, once again, you know, Mr. Speaker, for this member to use this situation to score cheap political points, I find it very offensive. What the Catholic bishops did put in the letter was that there were some people that were fighting against Catholic education. Our government stands with strengthening Catholic education across this province. We have done so over the last couple of years, and we will continue to do so to promote school choice between public schools, Catholic schools, charter schools, home-schooling, and francophone schools in the province of Alberta.

Thank you very much.

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

Health Care System

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Six months ago the Auditor General released a report on our health care system. Only two months ago the AG said in a Public Accounts meeting that we need people of all backgrounds and at all levels "to act immediately if we are going to make a difference in the lives of Albertans." To the Minister of Health: with needed improvements identified six months ago, what exactly have you done since then?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I'm very proud of the work that we've done with our primary care network physicians to ensure that we have a new governance model and greater integration between acute care and primary care. We know that that's going to result in better outcomes for Albertans, supporting better care in the community. As well as the amending agreement, which I mentioned earlier, we're continuing to implement that and moving forward with other tenets as we prepare for further negotiations with physicians, and we're investing \$400 million to better integrate and share information across the health care system. I'm very proud of our track record, and I know that 20 per cent cuts proposed by the members opposite would do no such thing.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, during Public Accounts members from the Department of Health, Alberta Health Services, the Alberta Medical Association, and the College of Physicians & Surgeons all indicated their support for the AG's report. Given that they have all identified that improvements do have to be made, to the minister: can you define your plan and give us a timeline?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I share the concerns that were raised specifically around the instability that we've seen under Alberta Health Services in the past, and I have to say that bringing stability has and continues to be one of my guiding principles as we make a shift to community-based care and supporting all patients.

I'll tell you what wouldn't help with that: divisive, two-tier, privatized health care. I won't stand for that, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're moving forward to protect Albertans, not push the Jason Kenney cuts that the members opposite are so gleeful for.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, our health care system is still failing. Our wait times have increased in many areas. We're still paying 20 per cent more than our neighbours for the same results, and recently the head of AHS wrote a column celebrating our health care system when it is a system that is not working well. When will this government recognize that the Auditor General's report is reasonable and provides guidance to this Health minister? When will you act on this plan, how will you do it, and when will you do it? Give us a timeline.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our public health care system in this province. I know that, just like with pipelines, the members opposite are cheering for Alberta to fail, but our front-line providers, our communities are standing with us to make sure that we improve health care, not lead to its demise by pushing a 20 per cent reckless agenda, which would result in closing emergency rooms, closing hospitals, probably many in opposition ridings as they so gleefully ask for more money and at the same time 20 per cent cuts. We're working with communities to bring about sustainability and improved health outcomes, and I'm very proud of that.

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

Caribou Range Plans

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the federal progress report on caribou range planning we learned that the Alberta government has indicated they will be providing a draft provincial range plan to the federal government by December of

this year. In an effort to provide the transparency this process has been sadly lacking, can the minister provide specifics on what this range plan entails, and will the NDP provide the Legislature as a whole and even the groups most affected an opportunity to review and comment on the document prior to submitting it to the federal government in December?

2:20

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the member is quite right that the province is putting together a series of range plans to recover the iconic caribou species. We've been doing that for a couple of years now and consulting with communities, particularly the most affected communities, as we try to find a way forward both for the caribou and for the jobs and the economic development that buoys this province. I'll have more to say about that in follow-ups.

Mr. Loewen: Given that this government has been severely negligent in timely consultation with communities and industries, creating enormous strain and worry for those most affected, and given that a socioeconomic impact study is a very wide-ranging study and that it is critical to gather information from many groups, organizations, and governments, can the minister tell us who has been consulted with so far on the socioeconomic impact study, who remains to be consulted with, and how will this information be used to form the caribou range plans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member well knows, there are a number of different range plans and a number of different geographic locations in the province. We have talked to First Nations, the forestry sector, small business, oil and gas, municipalities, a number of different stakeholders in addition to environmental groups and scientists as well, and the federal government. I have been around the province to discuss this matter as well. We know that we are going to have a made-in-Alberta solution to this issue. We will not have a protection order imposed on us by doing nothing, which is, of course, what the previous government did in the question of the sage grouse.

Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Given that in September I attended the Whitecourt panel discussion on caribou planning organized by the community and given the standing-room-only capacity of the event and the grave concerns expressed by the citizens at the event, why did the Minister of Environment and Parks feel it was unnecessary for her to attend this important event and ease the public's concerns, considering that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry would not commit to no job losses as a result of the caribou planning process?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice that the member got to Whitecourt. I was there last January. I was able to tour a number of facilities and consult with a number of folks in the area, including the chambers of commerce, municipalities, and others. The fact of the matter is that the Alberta Forest Products Association's president and CEO, for example, has said that the government of Alberta has engaged with stakeholders and that it's encouraging to hear our ideas and work together to conserve the caribou. We'll have more to say about that when we release the draft plans.

Thank you.

Energy Policies

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, Berman, Mahon, Hudema, Pembina, Tides, Rockefeller, Trudeau, comrades Horgan and Singh, and our own local version of the job-killing, investment-repelling NDP: with friends like these, industry investors and hard-working Albertans don't need enemies. Given that industry leaders say that the common thread here is that Canada generally has displayed an unwelcoming policy environment and uncertain approval process, to the Minister of Energy: will you explain to Albertans how the NDP world view has resulted in the abandonment of over \$56 billion in energy sector projects?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. I'm very pleased to be able to talk about the health of Alberta's economy and the fact that we seem to have turned a corner. Jobs are up. Wages are up. Drilling is up. Confidence in Alberta's energy sector is up. We secured two pipelines in two years of government. Just last week we learned that drilling activity is up sharply this year over last, and Suncor reported their best quarterly results since oil was \$100 a barrel. That's the record of this side of the House.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that the carbon tax, the minimum wage, corporate and personal tax hikes, irresponsible deficits, and an unwelcoming investment climate have resulted in the flight of over \$35 billion in foreign direct investment and given that only one of your climate plan photo op crew even remains in the province with the departure of Murray Edwards, Brian Ferguson, and Lorraine Mitchelmore, to the Minister of Finance. Corporate tax revenue has been consistently down during your tenure. Can you tell us if you're expecting to be a billion dollars short of your forecast for a second year in a row?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, Amazon, RocketSpace, Swoop, Champion Petfoods, Pinnacle, Google, Cavendish Farms: in the last six months all of these companies have made investments here in Alberta. In the last seven months our retail sales hit \$6.8 billion, beating out the prerecession peak of \$6.7 billion. Alberta's economy is the fastest growing in Canada, and since the depths of the recession Alberta has created nearly 72,000 jobs.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to see what the net new jobs are in terms of public sector versus private sector.

To the Minister of Energy. Given what we're hearing from Greenpeace: victoire; from Pembina: bam, victory; from Bayer Robertson: loud and clear; from NDP Horgan: see you in court; from clean coal technology: adios; from Hanna, Hinton, Forestburg, Keephills, and Grande Cache: nice knowing you; and given the recent cancellation of Energy East and continued uncertainty around Keystone and Trans Mountain, can you tell Albertans when you will stop playing social licence croquet and suit up for a little hardball in defence of Alberta jobs, investment, and national prosperity?

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the members opposite, with this kind of hardball rhetoric, do realize that you don't get what you want by threatening to hurt people. You do understand that, right?

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have secured approval for two new pipelines that will bring over 20,000 good new jobs to Alberta,

20,000 jobs that the folks on that side of the House could never secure. Our petrochemicals diversification program will add another 3,000 jobs, jobs that those folks over there voted against. We're working to create 7,200 jobs with renewables projects, again opposed by conservatives.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Diabetes Support in Schools

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Last week I was fortunate to meet a diabetes advocate who passionately shared her story of how challenging it is as a single parent to manage her daughter's insulin-dependent diabetes while she's at school and the impact that it has on her daughter. As a working mother she struggles to get her daughter's insulin levels well controlled without appropriate help from the school. To the Minister of Education: why hasn't the government of Alberta created policies to work with schools and parents in order to address all of the needs of children living with diabetes in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud of the relationship we have with our advocates in this province and the work that we've done to reduce the reckless conservative cuts that were proposed just prior to the last election and that are advocated for every day in this House. We know that members opposite are pushing for deep cuts that would hurt Alberta families. Instead, we're working with them and with other agencies across the province to ensure that the services they need are protected and supported, and I am proud of that record.

Ms McPherson: Given that Diabetes Canada has been advocating on this issue for years and support for children with diabetes is something that I'm sure everyone in this House agrees on and given that students living with diabetes have the right to be full and equal participants in school and all school-related activities without the fear of being excluded, stigmatized, or discriminated against, again to the Minister of Education: why is Alberta still one of the only provinces which does not have standards and policies in place for the health and safety of kids with diabetes in school?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this is an issue that has been brought to my attention both by advocates here across the province and nationally as well. I think that we have made some progress in regard to type 2 diabetes, but certainly with type 1 diabetes there's lots of room for improvement. You know, we want to work closely with our partners every step of the way to ensure the health and the integrity of all students – right? – regardless of who they are. In order to do that, of course, you have to make sure that you make investments in education, which we have done over the last year.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Given that diabetes is a complicated and sometimes life-threatening condition that requires close and careful management, not just treatment, and given that type 1 diabetes is a lifelong condition impacting more and more children every year, to the Education minister: has the government analyzed the implications of not having standards of care for students with diabetes in school as it relates to the long-term health and well-being of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:30

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I had said previously, yes, we certainly have been looking into it. There's been strong advocacy in regard to both type 1 and type 2 diabetes for children here in the province, and yes, we do determine that there are more students that have that very thing. We are ensuring that we will look into it further. It's important to make sure that you keep that level of investment in education every step of the way so that we can achieve these goals. If you make deep cuts in public education, then, of course, all of these things are off the table.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-Bow.

Seniors' Issues

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's seniors deserve to live affordably and in comfort. Back in August 2016 my office reached out to stakeholders that work with seniors in Calgary-Bow. We even have a name, the Calgary-Bow seniors constellation. At one of these meetings we heard that there's a shortage of affordable housing for seniors. Can the Minister of Seniors and Housing please address what our government is doing to help seniors access affordable housing?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're making life better for Albertans by investing in safe and affordable housing. We're building more than 4,100 affordable housing homes through 62 construction projects and planning projects for 3,000 seniors specifically. Not only are we increasing capacity; we're maintaining affordable housing that the previous government left in disrepair. We know that Jason Kenney's Conservatives would be stopping these projects. We as a government are supporting seniors in our province.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We also heard that dementia rates continue to be on the rise, and our population continues to age. To the same minister: what is being done to address this increased demand, and specifically what is this government doing to help seniors who face social isolation and lack of supports?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I'd like to thank the MLA for Calgary-Bow for her advocacy for the seniors in her community. My ministry is supporting seniors to age in their communities, close to their family and friends, with our seniors' home adaptation and repair program. Further, seniors on low income can access various supports such as housekeeping, yard maintenance, and transportation. Health is finalizing the dementia strategy, which will be released this fall. We are making life better for Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another stakeholder that was present at the meeting addressed an issue regarding the limited support for hearing and sight needs, specifically hearing aids. To the Minister of Health: what is our government doing to support seniors in meeting these basic needs?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Alberta aids to daily living, which provides funding for medical equipment so that Albertans can live healthy and independent lives, is important to us and our government. These programs are relied on by Albertans, including those well below the so-called middle-class income of Jason Kenney's \$200,000. Our government is here to stand up for Albertans who need these services every day, not make drastic cuts like Jason Kenney and his friends opposite are pushing for.

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

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Constituents of mine were shocked to have their AISH supports clawed back. One spouse receives AISH while the other partner, a senior citizen, has moved into receiving old age security, guaranteed income support, CPP, and workers' compensation for a permanent disability. The clawback in one partner's AISH is due to the other partner's income from pensions whereas if this senior citizen was still able to work and earning the same amount, his partner's AISH would not be affected. To the Minister of Community and Social Services. Income is income. Where is the common sense in treating income differently?

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. AISH is an important program that provides supports to 57,000 Albertans, and it works in conjunction with other support programs available. Over the period of the last two years we have released an AISH action plan and worked to make it more efficient and more transparent, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP bills themselves as the party of caring, sharing, and social justice and given that the minister is hurting seniors as they cross the threshold of old age, clawing back their income support programs, and seeing as how divorce by AISH or turn criminal and lie seem to be the only ways to restore needed benefits to make ends meet with couples, is the minister prepared to reform AISH income exemption tables to treat pension income the same as any other income?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have released an AISH action plan, which outlines the steps we will take to improve the AISH program. We are doing it by creating a simpler application form, by training staff and providing them better training, and by providing clear standards to ensure the program works in the best interests of Albertans. We have added \$70 million to this program just this year. Some over there do think that supports to disabilities are just giveaways.

Mr. Hanson: An absolutely disappointing answer, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the Auditor General has come out swinging that assured income for the severely handicapped applications favour people who are persistent and good at completing forms and given that the Auditor General found inconsistencies with the program, where applicants who are working 30 hours a week have been denied coverage yet people who are already receiving AISH were allowed to work the same number of hours, is the minister going to

bring some common sense into his department and fix these problems before Alberta's most vulnerable fall through the cracks?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We respect the work the Auditor General did and accepted all the recommendations, and in response we put together an AISH action plan, which outlines exactly the response, what the Auditor General asked us to do. But let me tell you about common sense. All Albertans across this province think that it's not common sense to cut \$209 million, 20 per cent, from the AISH program or to bring it back to B.C. levels by cutting \$600 from the supports they are getting. You can't have it both ways.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Workers' Compensation System

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, when Bill 6 was first introduced, many members in this House asked the Minister of Labour whether she and her department had initiated an economic impact study in order to determine how Alberta farmers and ranchers were going to be affected. Her answer: they had not. After over two years I thought surely they would have performed one by now, only to find out this morning: still nothing. To the minister: how do you plan on measuring the adverse effects on farmers and ranchers due to Bill 6?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the work that our government has done to work with farmers and ranchers on the implementation of Bill 6. As promised, before making any changes, we have been working with farmers and ranchers, giving Albertans the opportunity to review recommendations just recently posted from the occupational health and safety technical working groups. We will continue to work with the farming and ranching community on the implementation steps and those recommendations from our technical working groups.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that earlier today the PAC was informed that the reason why WCB is not returning \$1.9 billion worth of rebates to struggling Alberta employers is because they are unsure how new legislation and regulations are going to affect their bottom line. To the Minister of Labour: do you think Alberta employers should bear this burden while you figure out which direction you want to go?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to say that our government believes that all workers deserve fair rehabilitation in a sustainable system if they are injured. That is why we initiated the first review of the WCB in 15 years, to make sure that both employers and workers can have confidence in that system. The decision to not return surpluses was made independently by the board of the WCB using their sound financial practices. Surpluses are not being folded into general revenue for the government. Rather, we are making sure we have a sustainable system that provides fair compensation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans are being saddled with the carbon tax, the minimum wage increases, the new labour

laws, to name a few hurdles, and given that the federal government is also increasing taxes, to the same minister: how can the WCB justify holding back on average almost \$12,000 of WCB rebates per Alberta employer when businesses are hurting so much in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely critical that Albertans can feel confident that they have a WCB system that will take care of them and their family when they are injured on the job and that employers know there is a system that is sustainable. That is why we began the first major review in 15 years, and I'm very proud of the work the panel has done and the recommendations that we have received on that. I know that Jason Kenney wants to make life harder for Albertans. We will continue to work through issues like doing the panel review of the WCB to make life better for Albertans.

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

2:40 Downtown Edmonton Health and Social Services

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of our government's support for essential health and social services like emergency shelters, supportive housing, and supervised consumption sites, and I deeply value our community partners who deliver them. However, in our central communities some have expressed concerns about their concentration in our city core even while police and others have called for a downtown wellness centre to serve those in crisis. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: given that all parties involved will be looking to our government for funding, how are you engaging stakeholders to determine the best way to balance our communities' needs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We are absolutely committed to making sure that all Albertans have a safe place to call home, and we all need to work together to combat homelessness and poverty. That is why we are working with the community partners, different orders of government, and all those who are concerned to get this right.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that our ultimate objective is to end homelessness and that this will require investing in a range of services and housing across our city and given that invaluable existing partners are seeking funding to improve and expand their services downtown, what factors will you be considering when you make recommendations to the Minister of Infrastructure on these projects?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I personally have worked in a homeless shelter, and I do know that homelessness is a complex issue, and we need to work across government with our community partners and with other orders of government. Before making any recommendation, I will make sure that we have a well-thought-out, well co-ordinated plan to address the issues in the downtown core and across this province.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that Councillor Scott McKeen of the city of Edmonton has called for Edmonton's urban wellness plan to explore supportive housing across our city and given that while communities like Oliver embrace this, others, some unfortunately encouraged by federal Conservative politicians, are instead embracing fear and perpetuating stigma, will you commit to supporting the city of Edmonton in asking all communities to play a part in helping to end homelessness?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we are absolutely committed to working with all partners – community partners and other orders of government – to make sure that we have a well-thought-out and well co-ordinated plan to address this complex issue. That is why we have invested \$190 million, and we will continue to make those investments to make sure that Albertans looking for those supports have those supports. But there are folks over there who want to cut 20 per cent from that, which would mean that they will cut somewhere around \$35 million from existing supports.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

In 30 seconds we will proceed.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Fiscal Policies and Prosperity

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just over a week ago the Leader of the Official Opposition said, "We understand that in order to be a compassionate, caring province, we must be prosperous first," to which I responded, "Actually, some of the most compassionate, caring and generous people I've known have been those who personally had very little." Some then suggested that I was financially illiterate and failed to understand the meaning of the original statement. Well, in truth, I think I understood it far too well because that statement doesn't simply stand on its own, devoid of history and content. It's deeply rooted in a failed conservative ideology.

The truth is that Alberta is a prosperous province. We long have been, and we continue to be. Yes, we're coming out of a difficult period, but we still lead Canada in terms of economic power and growth. We have the capacity, even during challenging times, to look after our own.

The record shows that when the price of oil has dropped, conservative governments consistently made life harder for everyday Alberta families with short-sighted, poorly planned cuts to services we all rely on. Albertans lost jobs; hospitals, roads, and schools were left to crumble; and the holes in our social safety net grew. When things improved, they used our increased prosperity not to invest in the long-term sustainable vision to help everyday Albertans but to help their friends with unsustainable tax cuts that left us even more dependent on volatile resource revenue.

Mr. Speaker, our government was elected on a promise not to make Albertans pay for the mistakes of previous governments. Instead we've invested to support and create jobs in growing sectors like agrifood, technology, and green energy, to build long-needed infrastructure, and to address social inequalities that hurt families and drag our economy down. Those aren't luxuries; those are key

measures that lay a foundation for increased prosperity as our economy recovers.

Mr. Speaker, what we can't afford are the sorts of empty rhetoric, reckless policies, and social regression promised by our opposition, policies that will undermine prosperity and make Albertans' lives worse. Albertans need a compassionate government committed to prosperity for all Albertans, and that's what we'll continue to be.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Openness and Transparency in Government

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP proclaims itself an open and transparent government, but their actions are murky and contradictory. They communicate in voice mode because they don't want to be held to anything written. They ordered over 800,000 e-mails deleted with prizes for whoever deletes the most. There can be no reason except to cover their own tracks from public record.

Our constituency staff are frustrated with another disconcerting problem. Has the NDP given instructions to all government departments that no information is to be given to constituency staff in opposition ridings without first getting permission from the minister's office? Staff who have served for 20 years under different Premiers and cabinets say that they have never encountered anything like this. Constituency staff are government employees. They are to serve the people of Alberta. When their own government blockades them from doing their job to help Albertans, you have to ask why.

A constituent wanted to mail a letter to a central region Alberta Health Services manager but needed an address. They asked the const office for a public official's government address. We called the minister's office for the address and were refused. We were told that all correspondence had to go to the minister. Constit staff argued that this is ridiculous and unheard of, to refuse the public address of a public official. Later, after getting permission from higher up, the address was provided. This is a most extreme form of control.

Another constit asked for clarification to an order taped to the door of her residence. It indicated that the suite she maintained was not suitable for rent. Okay. She asked us to find out how long the notice had to remain posted and provided us with the notice contact number that was provided. It was just a clarification question. The government department employee who answered the call was afraid to give an answer and said that her supervisor would have to. Ten days later we finally got a callback. Was the supervisor required to go to the minister's office in order to get permission to do his job? Limiting government staff because the ministers don't trust them . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42: be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately begin aggressive preparations for the 2018-2019 equalization renegotiations and update the Assembly on those preparations.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in question period I had some questions to the Service Alberta minister wanting an explanation on how we had a D grade for all of Canada for our freedom of information and how dreadful that is. There are five copies of the media release.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned an editorial in my question today, so I have the duty to table it. It says: "The NDP's position on sex education is a repudiation of diversity."

2:50

The Speaker: Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with two documents related to my member's statement yesterday. I have the necessary five copies here. The first article is from CBC News entitled: Kenney's Unclear Abortion Stance Imperils Reproductive Rights, Analyst Says. It was written July 8, 2016.

The second was an article from PressProgress entitled Anti-abortion Group Tells Supporters to Buy PC Memberships and Help Jason Kenney Take Over Party. It also has a photo of Jason Kenney that says Jason Kenney, Anti-abortion Activist.

The Speaker: Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings. The first would be the Alberta Health Services performance report, and I'll highlight just three indicators. I'll give them full marks on acute-care discharge rates in Canada but a failing grade in relation to continuing care placements and mental health access.

Also, the letter from the Health minister explaining some of the reasons behind the continuing low performance of the health system relative to spending and an article from the Canadian Institute for Health Information that highlights both Alberta's sky-high health care costs and Alberta doctors' costs, which have gone up 9 per cent over the past year.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of a document dated October 4, 2017, from ATB Financial's economics and research team. In the publication it shows that things are looking up in Alberta, including tourism. It states: "This year, tourism will continue that same momentum and may break another record." That's good news to people in Banff-Cochrane and across the province.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I wish to table an Oral Question Period rotation referenced in my statement from yesterday.

I'm also tabling a copy of the House leaders' agreement, which I received at 1:03 on November 6. I will be making a statement with respect to the Members' Statements rotation outlined in this agreement later in today's Routine.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, responses to questions raised by Dr. Swann, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View; Dr. Starke, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster; Mr. Smith, hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon;

Mr. Hinkley, hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose; and Mr. Loewen, hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, on April 11, 2017, Ministry of Health 2017-18 main estimates debate.

The Speaker: I believe we are at points of order. Is that correct? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Nixon: I'll rise for that point of order, Mr. Speaker, if that's okay.

The Speaker: Yeah.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Nixon: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays raised a point of order in response to an answer to a question by myself to the Premier. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'll rise on 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." In response to the question – we talk, actually, a lot about pipelines of late. It's a pretty important issue before the Assembly, and often there's some back and forth with it, but it's disappointing today to see the Premier misrepresent some significant facts. By misrepresenting those facts before the Assembly, I would argue, too, that she continues to cause disorder in the Assembly. In fact, she said that Mr. Kenney did not get any pipelines built when in fact the Harper government actually got the Trans Canada Keystone, not XL, the Enbridge Alberta Clipper, the Kinder Morgan anchor loop expansion, and the Enbridge line 9 reversal built.

Mr. Speaker, I know you want me to hurry. The point is that the Premier continues to rise in this Assembly when in fact she has no pipelines built, only two cancelled, and the Leader of the Opposition has four . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I think your case is . . . [interjections] Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a point of debate and not a point of order. The challenge facing our energy industry is getting market access. Really, to do that, what we need is to get a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater, something which we have successfully managed to do and they have not managed to do. I know that they are upset by that, but that doesn't change the facts. Obviously, this is a dispute. It has nothing to do with . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. I agree. It is not a point of order. It is one of opinion.

Calgary-Elbow, you wanted to what?

Mr. Clark: I called a point of order during my question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't know there was another point of order. I'm sorry; I've not been advised about the point of order, hon. member.

Mr. Clark: In response to the Premier's response to my question.

The Speaker: Okay.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to proceed on this point of order under 23(h), "makes allegations

against another Member"; (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member"; and (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I'd also refer to *Beauchesne's* sixth edition, section 486(3), discussing unparliamentary language. Subsection (3) just says that there are a few words that are always unparliamentary, and the list updates on a regular basis.

The new word I think that we should declare unparliamentary in this House, Mr. Speaker, is "mansplaining." It is a term that is essentially accusing me of sexism. It is an offensive term. It is not the first time it has been used in this House. It is essential that all members of the opposition and, indeed, all members of this House have the freedom to hold government to account and do so without being accused of sexism or just simply being called names. Mr. Speaker, I do take this accusation very seriously, and I categorically and emphatically reject this characterization. I would like for the Premier to apologize and withdraw that remark.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak on this particular matter. The exchange in question occurred between the hon. member and the hon. Premier. The Premier is, honestly, one of the smartest people I have ever met in my life, has been in this House for an incredibly long time, has been a vocal champion of pipelines, and the hon. member asked her if she was aware of the benefits of pipelines. Of course she's aware. Incidentally, so am I.

Just because sexism is polite doesn't make it not sexism. Mr. Speaker, I don't really think that it's appropriate to say, just because the question was asked in a polite but condescending manner, that it's not a condescending statement. I will read, for the record, the definition of mansplaining: "to comment on or explain something to a woman in a condescending, overconfident, and often inaccurate or oversimplified manner." Obviously, the member opposite thought that questioning the Premier on whether she understood the benefits of pipelines was appropriate. Obviously, she didn't feel that it was appropriate, but I don't think that calling a spade a spade should suddenly become unparliamentary language.

I think that this is obviously a case where, you know, just because it's said politely, it doesn't make it okay. We've had, obviously, some vociferous disagreements in this House, and, Mr. Speaker, that's fine. Everyone has the right to disagree and to state their opinion, but I think that saying that in this instance it was just fine for the member to ask the question the way in which he did and it wasn't fine for the hon. Premier to comment on the manner in which the question was asked is – we're just splitting hairs at a certain point. I think it is and shall remain my view that just because discriminatory behaviour is framed in a polite manner, it doesn't make it okay.

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I rise to address this issue because of my long-held and strongly held feelings for parliamentary decorum. In this particular instance, I'm particularly concerned that we have a relatively new term that is creeping into usage within the House and that it has directly applied with it specific motives and backgrounds that are a problem and, I think, definitely diminish the overall tone within the House.

You will recall that last month I represented the province at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association seminar in Charlottetown, attended also by the members for St. Albert and Cypress-Medicine Hat. At that meeting we talked a lot about the

deterioration of decorum in the Houses of Parliament all across our land. These things happen incrementally. They don't happen all at once. They happen incrementally.

The term "mansplaining" is not in any list in *Beauchesne* because it's such a new term. It only started to be used in blog posts in about 2008. In 2010 it became the *New York Times* word of the year. In 2014 it became the word of the year in the Australian dictionary. It's in the Oxford online dictionary, but it's not actually in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. That's how new it is.

Now, why do I say all these things, Mr. Speaker? It's because mansplaining infers that the person asking the question, generally a man to a woman, is acting in a sexist or condescending manner. It implies that – as hon. members, if we were to call another member sexist, we would be called out of order, and rightly so. To say that there was mansplaining going on – and this is not the first time. Recently, in response to a question from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat the Minister of Energy accused that member of mansplaining. Now we have the Premier accusing the Member for Calgary-Elbow of mansplaining.

Mr. Speaker, opposition members need to be able to ask questions regardless of the gender of the minister being asked. That is part of the overall equality we have in this House, and it is part of the honourable behaviour that is expected of all members. To immediately, then, suggest that a question is equivalent to mansplaining also suggests that the member asking the question is behaving in a sexist manner. That is not something that would be permitted, and because of that the term "mansplaining" should not be allowed within this Chamber.

There is relatively little parliamentary precedent in the use of this term, but if we borrow from the February 11, 2016, exchange between two Australian Senators, you will find an interesting exchange as to what exactly the term "mansplaining" is.

Mansplaining is most decidedly a damaging activity. It is a damaging thing to do, but to suggest that hon. members within this House are participating in something that is fundamentally sexist is insulting and most certainly imputing false motives, especially, I would say, to the Member for Calgary-Elbow, in whose track record has never been a shred of any form of sexism. To suggest that that's what is going on today by the Premier is parliamentarily out of order, and you, sir, should rule accordingly.

The Speaker: Is there something you'd add, Member for Airdrie?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly like to add to the discussion and the debate. Perhaps if the gender of the asker and the gender of the receiver were reversed, I think, if womansplaining were to be used in a direct reverse conversation, that would certainly be ruled out of order. That's something to consider in making your ruling because I absolutely think this should be ruled out of order.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I learn many words in this place, and I think this is one of them that's on the list that I didn't even know existed before.

To the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, on the recent example that you cite from Australia: I don't have the opportunity in this short period of time – I will, though, look it up.

I think I need to read my ruling before I make a comment. I think I know the way I'll be going, but I want to make sure that I'm in alignment with the decision I made earlier. With that, I would like to come back tomorrow with a decision, if I might.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements House Leaders' Agreements

The Speaker: Hon. members, as you recall, yesterday I indicated during my statement on the rotation of questions that my office received a House leaders' agreement at 1:03 p.m. that day containing proposed Oral Question Period and Members' Statements rotations. I stated yesterday that I would review the proposals, which I have done.

In my statement yesterday, found at pages 1745 and 1746 of *Alberta Hansard*, I also spoke about the question period rotation, and I outlined a rotation that would be implemented today. That rotation, which was distributed yesterday and which I have tabled, will continue to apply, barring any new House leaders' agreement that is fairer to all members.

With respect to the proposed Members' Statements rotation, I accept the House leaders' proposal, and it will be implemented in accordance with Standing Order 7(5), which provides:

Members' Statements shall be allocated in proportion to the number of Members other than members of the Executive Council in each party represented in the Assembly or as agreed to by House Leaders or, failing agreement, as determined by the Speaker.

I note that both parts of the agreement are signed by the Government House Leader and the Official Opposition.

There is a notable absence, however, of any signature from the third party. I performed some research and discovered that a third party has been included in signatures to House leaders' agreements dating back to 1997. These include a signature for the time in April 2001, which the Government House Leader was a signatory to.

I would encourage all House leaders to be involved in future agreements, for those that are designated, and such agreements should include the signatures of each of the House leaders or their designates. I would encourage the two House leaders to do that to at least reflect that there has been genuine consultation.

Before I proceed any further, I want to point out that this rotation differs from the rotation described yesterday. The details respecting the agreement on members' statements are as follows. A three-week rotation will continue. 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. They also receive one statement on Thursdays. The third-party opposition will receive a statement on Thursdays of weeks 1 and 3. The one-member caucuses and the independent members each receive one statement per week on a Thursday.

For additional details on the Members' Statements rotation, please consult the revised projected sitting days calendar, which will replace the one distributed yesterday and which will be distributed to all members.

The House leaders' agreement on rotation of Members' Statements will take effect tomorrow, Wednesday, November 8.

I think the Leader of the Official Opposition had a motion.

3:10

Mr. Mason: I had a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Mason: I want to ask you under section 13(2) to explain the reasons for any decision regarding the lack of a signature by the so-called third-party House leader. Considering that when this

agreement was agreed to and signed, there was no third party, much less a third-party House leader, how were we to fulfill your requirement, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: You're partially correct. In fact, my office has not been advised that the third group has a House leader, so at this point it's part of the reason why I accepted the statement made by yourselves. I think my intention to the point that you're raising is that there will be at least consultation with the Alberta Party plus, also, the independents on a go-forward basis.

You are correct, though, that I have not been advised that there is a House leader. I'm simply referring to the future, that the chair can be assured that there has been consultation with independents and that the chair is reassured that the interests of the minorities are protected in the House. That's why I've agreed at this time to abide by the agreement that you and the Opposition House Leader signed in the Members' Statement order that you provided to my office.

Mr. Mason: You're abiding by it?

The Speaker: Yes.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: Now are we at the Official Opposition with respect to the motion? Please proceed.

Federal Equalization Payment Negotiations

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately begin aggressive preparations for the 2018-2019 equalization renegotiations and update the Assembly on those preparations.

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me today. This is an urgent issue that needs to be discussed by this House. In the past Alberta was able to get our resources and our products to market, and today that is not the case, which is creating a certain amount of urgency, a significant amount of urgency. I think that most Albertans would agree with me on that fact.

We have a federal government currently that is directly responsible for killing two major pipeline projects. That has a dramatic impact on the country as a whole but, more specifically, on this province, creating a level of urgency to have a discussion on how the equalization process would work. Provincial and municipal politicians love the wealth, Mr. Speaker, from our energy sector but are currently working to block the transport of our energy products.

The opposition and the government in recent days are in agreement on that concern and the urgency to act as a province to be able to make sure that something is done about that. We were happy throughout this week and last week to see the Premier following our lead, leaving the province, and beginning to defend pipelines on that issue.

But when it comes to the equalization formula expiring in 2019, the negotiations need to begin immediately for us to be able to undertake negotiations of that magnitude. For the province and for this current NDP government to continue to delay that process and not have a discussion with this House and to report to Albertans on where we are at on that certainly brings me to the point where I'm rising today to try to pass this simple motion to make it clear that we are going to be moving forward to get ready for those important negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of no matter more important than this. I think that it would send an extremely good message to the federal

government and to the provinces if we stand united on this in this House to make it clear that what is happening is not acceptable and that if Albertans continue to be treated this way, we will look to renegotiate the equalization formula or we will start to do that as a result of the actions that are taking place.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to give this motion support so that we can stand together to stand for Albertans.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I need to remind you that under Standing Order 42 you're being called upon for unanimous support for an urgent and pressing matter, a necessity, as outlined by the Official Opposition leader.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 21

Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move third reading of Bill 21, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017.

Provincial government agencies, boards, and commissions, or ABCs, play a pivotal role in delivering important programs and services to Albertans as well as providing oversight and advice on Alberta issues. We remain committed to continuing the review of Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions to identify what is working and what can be improved and what is no longer providing value to Albertans. The ongoing review of agencies, boards, and commissions ensures that ABCs are transparent, accountable, and using public dollars effectively and efficiently. Make no mistake: we will continue to ensure that Albertans continue to be well served and represented.

Bill 21, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017, will enable us to implement dissolutions where legislative amendments are required for 14 agencies, boards, and commissions. This bill is one part of numerous key changes that this government has already undertaken for ABCs such as executive compensation reform, enhanced compensation transparency, an improved online board application process, and greater transparency and diversity on Alberta's public agency boards.

I appreciate the excellent discussion we've had with our fellow hon. members on this bill. Thank you for your work and for your commitment to transparency, efficiency, and value in government. The overall review of agencies, boards, and commissions has resulted in numerous important changes to ensure their ongoing relevance, increase transparency, strengthen fiscal accountability and diversity, and to ensure better value for Albertans. I ask all members now to support Bill 21 in third reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I have the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka to speak to the bill.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to third reading of Bill 21, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017. We are in support of the

intent of the bill and will vote in support of third reading because I think the intent is good. I totally feel, like we have said before, that occasionally in life, as in government, there needs to be a little bit of housecleaning, and this is an opportunity to do some of that. It needs to happen on a regular basis. We're always in support of anything that examines the ever-growing collection of things that happen in any agency, including government, from policies to regulations to red tape. All these things always just seem to gather in huge piles until we truly do need housecleaning.

Having said that we're in support of it, though, I do have some comments that I think need to be said for the record, some things that are, I think, important and worth noting. First of all, I do want to say that I'm a little bit concerned that the UCP amendment was voted down with regard to the Agricultural Operation Practices Act Practice Review Committee. This is a committee that is important to Albertans. I realize it wasn't used much by Albertans, but the reality is that it wasn't costing anything either when it was not functioning or when it was not being used a lot. The reality is that with the increases in rural populations, increases in acreages, increases in agricultural densities there will and may be significant conflicts that should be reviewed, and there should be a mechanism by which to do that. We are disappointed that that amendment was not supported. The committee is viewed as being valuable by the farming community and should have been considered.

3:20

Secondly, I just want to make the comment that we're still a little bit confused here about the status of phase 3 of this entire ABC review. The phase 3 of this review was to cover postsecondary institutions. It was to talk about the issues of executive compensation, roles and mandates, and governance excellence in postsecondary institutions. What will the government do with that? Where is that review? When will the opportunity to discuss that and the plans be unveiled with regard to postsecondary institutions? This is a part of the conversation that does need to happen.

Thirdly, I would like to say that we really do want to affirm, especially with this government, the principle of at arm's length. This government has a poor track record with ABCs and, as I mentioned earlier, even with government departments and allowing people the permission to function as they should. This is something where it's important to review the governance, but when it comes to the daily operation and the decisions of boards, the government should not be meddling politically in them. They should not be subject to government oversight on a daily kind of basis, as one of the NDP members mentioned during debate. Government oversight of ABCs is directly contradictory to the principle of at arm's length. Accountability is one thing, but interference is a completely different thing. It's a concept that needs to be understood. We've seen that with AIMCo, we've seen that with a number of other departments, and it's concerning because ABCs are to operate at arm's length.

I'd also like to ask, as I asked earlier, the question: where is the evidence? Where is some kind of documentation, some kind of proof, that \$33 million in savings have actually been attained? That is the stated goal of this review. The NDP say that they've saved \$33 million. How do we know that that's truly happened? Is it really in the accounting, or is it just a nice-sounding estimate? Without some sort of actual numbers it looks to me like it might actually be a political puffball for the public. Where the savings actually come from we have yet to see and yet to hear. Are there really \$33 million in savings? I hope so. I will applaud the government if there are, but there's no evidence to that fact so far if it is, in fact, a fact.

Furthermore, I'd like to express some concern about the Alberta Economic Development Authority. One of our members questioned

the wisdom of dissolving this particular authority. This is a government that claims that it wants to promote diversification, that it wants to develop other kinds of industries, yet it hasn't used this authority, this Economic Development Authority. They've let it sort of just sit. This is an opportunity for a group, that previously was very active, to do the kinds of real things in terms of economic development and trade that should be an ongoing reality, quite frankly, no matter which government is in power, but especially for this government because this is the one thing they always want to talk about, yet in reality they're dissolving the very authority that was dedicated to accomplishing what they say are their objectives. So I do have some concerns that they weren't using this authority, that they weren't consulting with them.

I guess I would further like to say in that regard that a number of advisory councils across various departments with this government have not been called into action. I asked in estimates last spring about some of them. There has been no expenditure on them. There has been no calling of them. In other words, the government is continuing the practice of not consulting with stakeholders. We see a government that continually doesn't really care to consult with people. What it does continue to do rather than consult is to continue to take everything in-house. They demonstrate a centralizing, controlling DNA, and they really aren't willing to listen to what stakeholders have to say about much of anything. This bill, in a way, does reflect that ongoing tendency and other advisory councils that haven't even been called upon in the last two years. This is a little bit disturbing, and I want to point it out because I think any government should be listening to the people, should be seeking their input and their understanding. Stakeholders do matter. That's a concern that I have.

Lastly, I just want to say that it is important – and I said this earlier – that stability and confidence are the key drivers in many respects of trust for a government and for economic growth and investment, foreign investment to come into our province. We need to make sure that we have a government that's not just willy-nilly closing things down, shutting them down to align with their ideology, but they're actually doing things that are consulted with constituents, stakeholders that are wise and that are actually creating a stable government.

With that, Mr. Speaker, yes, we will support the bill, but I do have some concerns as I've just expressed. Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 21?

Seeing and hearing none, closure to the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose on behalf of the minister.

Mr. Hinkley: Mr. Speaker, thank you to everyone for their comments and insights into Bill 21. It is an honour to cosponsor this bill, which helps our government to curb unnecessary spending while delivering important services which help make life better for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring the debate to a close. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

Bill 22

Resident and Family Councils Act

The Speaker: The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to move third reading of Bill 22, the Resident and Family Councils Act.

I first wish to thank and acknowledge my fellow members on both sides of the House for the constructive debate on this Bill.

The act will support the establishment of resident and family councils in long-term care and supportive living facilities with four or more residents. These councils are an important mechanism for enabling residents and families to present requests, concerns, and proposed solutions to facility operators. They will empower residents to have a say on the issues that affect their facility and the services they receive. Councils will provide an opportunity to strengthen the crucial relationship between facility operators, residents, and their families. In fact, operators have helped to establish councils in over 70 per cent of these facilities already because they are a valuable mechanism for receiving feedback for the residents they serve.

Last week members spoke about the need for this bill after hearing from constituents who felt they did not have the ability to speak to their operators about their concerns and needs. Mr. Speaker, I believe this act will support residents and their families to take an active and engaged role in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life of residents in long-term care and supportive living facilities.

I'd like to once again thank everyone for their comments and support for this bill and to move third reading of Bill 22.

The Speaker: Are there any others wishing to speak to Bill 22? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand in this House today to support and discuss Bill 22, Resident and Family Councils Act. This bill will be ensuring that residents of long-term and licensed supportive care facilities will have the right to establish self-governing councils.

This legislation would apply to all public, private, and nonprofit long-term care and supportive living facilities. It's going to ensure an avenue for residents and family members to have their voices heard and be able to have a place to discuss their concerns regarding food, services, leisure activities amongst themselves and also with facility operators. Families have long been advocating for a place where they can voice their concerns regarding the care of their loved ones. Seniors and people with disabilities are now going to have a place where they will feel heard and feel more empowered when it comes to their daily lives.

3:30

On that note, Mr. Speaker, the very first constituents that I had come and visit me after I was elected were a family regarding this very issue. It was on the very first day I worked. So I'm very glad to see this come forward now.

Every adult person has a right to participate in their own care and should have a place to voice their views. British Columbia, for example, has the similar Community Care and Assisted Living Act. Their motto is that each person should be able "to participate in the development and implementation of his or her care plan." This is not only vital to ensuring accountability, but it also can increase one's awareness and mental alertness.

Families need to feel that they have the right to participate in either a residential or a family council to represent the interests of their family member, especially if they have been feeling alienated or not feeling heard previously. This can give a sense of security in ensuring that their loved one is being supported and cared for properly.

In British Columbia they even allow an advocate other than a family member who would be willing to participate on their behalf if, for example, due to work or other issues they're unable to attend

the meetings. There are also situations where seniors or people with disabilities may not have family at all or one that lives nearby. An advocate can then participate on their behalf. Having these types of standards and protections in place is vital for the safety of any senior or person with disabilities and also for the accountability of the facility itself.

This bill will give seniors, people with disabilities, and their loved ones a place where there is access to a fair and effective process to express their concerns. I've heard many sad stories of the alienation that a resident and a family can face when they feel that they have no control over their daily lives or that their concerns are not being validated. Sometimes these stories have ended in tragic situations, where the families were feeling that they weren't heard properly and they end up carrying the guilt of not stepping in and removing their loved one.

When these councils are formed, it's going to give a way for a group of seniors or people with disabilities or family members to hear different complaints and find solutions in a unified manner for how to deal properly with the situation. This gives families much more control over situations that were previously unforeseen that could potentially be mitigated. It also gives the family a sense of security in being able to voice their opinions about the day-to-day care that their loved one is receiving or the dietary needs that each resident may have, the quality of food and services that may or may not be available. Individual needs that can be voiced in a safe environment where staff members, other patients, and the facility are being held accountable is a very good idea.

I've heard of situations where there may be issues between tenants that end up being volatile and hurtful. I had just such a one occur last year in my own riding. This will also give those affected a place to be able to talk with others, to perhaps garner the group for solutions to the issues.

I'm happy to hear that the council will be able to meet whenever they need to and that no restrictions have been put in place about the number of times they meet and that facility operators will be required to work with the councils on quality-of-life concerns. Diet, services, and activities play a very important role in the mental health of seniors and persons with disabilities. This bill will ensure that residents will have more say in their quality of life and how their respective homes are run. This is one place where everyone will be able to discuss the operations of the facility and be able to invite one or more persons that work at the facility to join the council and participate.

I do have a couple of concerns, and I'm going to voice them here. I'm concerned, though, that the meeting may become too onerous and that it gives a place and maybe even a right to those who are contentious to gain control and abuse that situation. There needs to be a balance between the rights of the residents and unreasonable demands put on a facility.

I would like to have seen some sort of protocol in place that states that when meetings with the facility are scheduled, schedules be taken into consideration. If the facility operator is expected to document requests, concerns, and proposed solutions, then there has to be some sort of boundary put in place. Things could get rather chaotic. I do wish that some more thought would have been given to this area.

The other question that I have is: who would have access to these records and meeting documents? If the true intent is to bring transparency and allow the residents to be heard, then the members of the council should also have access – full access – to these records.

The other area of concern that I have is that given that the councils are given the right to determine their own governance structure and procedures, what protocols have been put in place to

ensure that this council will be inclusive of all residents? If this is the case, again, in a rare situation, if you have someone dictating order and procedures that wants to control the process and decide who will or will not be on council, there may be more problems. These councils have been legislated to ensure that residents and family members are able to monitor, influence, and improve the care of residents.

Albertans should have a voice in all matters that concern their lives. I'm glad to hear that we are committed to working alongside those with disabilities, seniors, families, and advocates to improve their quality of life, and for these reasons I fully support this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise and speak during third reading of Bill 22. I would like to say that I am supportive of this act and the intended purpose of expanding residents' and families' ability to participate in issues related to quality of life. However, I would like to draw attention to some of the language used around people with disabilities.

In my previous life I did manage an organization. Now, I think, they're up to 27 residences or homes in the community for people with disabilities. Although there are many levels of government, whether it's municipal bylaws, provincial legislation, or safety codes, that are intended to keep people safe and increase their quality of life, they sometimes have the opposite effect, and they sometimes create rules and processes that can be onerous for the people living there.

I just want to talk a little bit about why I think it's a little bit dangerous to group people with disabilities living in the community with the other facilities that we're talking about in this legislation. We're talking about social care facilities like nursing homes; we have extended care and things like that. Community living is very different. Community living is about a person with a disability choosing to live in their community in the most normal, average way possible. Very often you see groupings of people with disabilities that are sometimes forced to live together simply because of the cost: the cost of renting a home, the cost of owning a home, but also the cost to the funder of providing staff supports. Often you'll see a little collection of people with disabilities living together, sharing supports so that they can split it sort of 3 to 1 as opposed to 1 to 1.

Community living is a fragile thing. It's as fragile, I believe, as dignity and respect. I think it's important every day to respect the choices of people with disabilities that live in the community, and that means being aware of how many rules and inspections and things we put in their way.

Now, I believe that the intent of this legislation is to create really meaningful, positive processes. As a service provider in my previous life we knew that it was very, very important that the groups of people that live together as well as their families, their guardians, and their staff had a mechanism to come together to meet and to talk about things that were important, things that were important to them, that they identified, and things that were important to us, that we identified.

Of course, I'm sure most of you at some point in your life have lived with roommates. It's not easy. I think sometimes that living with more than one roommate is really quite difficult. Many of the folks we worked with had lived with roommates for many, many years, so sometimes the issues they dealt with were very, very complex.

But we did see changes – really positive changes – when we encouraged and supported those groups to come together and to

address things like staffing ratios, roles of staff, the menu, nutrition, outings, activities, what colour the living room would be painted, whether or not the bathroom needed to be renovated, all kinds of things. It was very useful, but it was also a way for us to work with the folks that live there to teach them that, first and foremost, this was their home. Certainly, their parents or their guardians or other loved ones had a role to play, but they were not the primary decision-makers even though they may have been guardians and they may have legally had the right to help with decisions. What we taught people was independence. It was about expressing their needs and expressing their wants, and I think it was a really great vehicle.

3:40

So I am really encouraged that institutions like nursing homes, like the other facilities we've talked about will be supported to start these committees or these family groups or councils up. It does require quite a bit of support at the beginning until people start to understand what their role and function is, how the minutes are kept, where they're kept, how they follow up, who gets what information.

It was a little bit discouraging last week to hear that people were more worried about the operators. I think that we should always be focused on the people, on Albertans that are living in these facilities, not the operators. First and foremost, their quality of life is the most important thing. Their happiness, their safety, their security: all of those things are so important.

I was encouraged to hear also about the fact that before the regulations are implemented or developed, there will be consultation with other groups. I think it is absolutely vital that people with disabilities are consulted properly and that the correct groups are consulted. It's important to speak to the people that are impacted by this legislation, and it's not all people with disabilities. It's only those homes that fall under SLALA. That's the acronym that stands for Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act. Those are only facilities that are in the community or homes in the community that have four or more people living in them.

Now, ideally, a community residence for people with disabilities should not be that large, I think, for real integration within a community. However, that is the reality of a lot of people. That is the cost of living in Alberta. It is very high.

Again I just wanted to remind people what community living is for people with disabilities. It looks very different from an institution, it looks very different from an auxiliary hospital or a nursing home, and the rules should be different. So when we do go out and consult, we have to go out and consult those very people that will be impacted by it.

Thinking about the operators in this sector, I think, is somewhat different. The rules that they live by and the accreditation processes that they go through actually mandate that they look at creating groups like this – they don't call them councils – that assist and support people that are living in those homes to express their desires on, you know, what the menu is or what colour their living room is or not necessarily their staffing ratios but what their staffing schedules are like. It is really, really important to understand that.

I wanted to give you one more example just to leave you with a picture of what it looks like when there are too many regulations in place for a group of people with disabilities living in the community. A few years ago we had one home – actually, it was a pretty big home – but we had four people living there simply because of the cost of living. So those four people, because there were four living in that one home, were required to meet some legislation or some rules and processes under that SLALA legislation. In addition to the accreditation process, where people

will come in and interview them and check that they're doing certain things with their staff – they have a plan in place; they have goals; they have objectives – in addition to the facilitator also doing service audits and staff audits, financial audits, monthly inspections, they were also subjected to other inspections that were triggered with this legislation. That was a health inspection, that was a fire inspection, and often there would be some someone from the city.

They would look at things – because the legislation is very complex and it does apply to facilities like a nursing home, we would get recommendations like: you need to have the menu posted within this many metres of the kitchen; the laundry has to be colour-coded; the people living there can't eat the vegetables that are grown in the garden because of food safety concerns. So you have to understand that to facilitate real community living for people with disabilities, you have to really consult and make sure that they understand what these changes mean to them in real time, in real life.

With that, I wanted to just say that I do support the legislation, but more than anything I support the consultation that will occur before the regulations are ready.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who would wish to speak to Bill 22? The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: One moment. For the record does 29(2)(a) apply to the last speaker?

Seeing none, thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Seniors and Housing I'm proud to stand in support of this bill, which will make a significant difference in the lives of Alberta seniors and their families. When seniors move into a lodge facility, they bring a wide range of backgrounds, life experiences, and interests with them. Citizens want to see those things become a part of their new residences.

You know, we have over 150 lodges across this province in corners all over our province, and one of the favourite parts of my job is to go to these seniors' lodges and visit with seniors all across our great province. I've certainly met so many. I feel very honoured and thankful. In fact, many of these lodges already have active residents' councils where people do come together and make decisions collectively. This bill, however, will ensure that every lodge will have a place for residents and families to feel safe to speak about their needs and desires.

In addition, seniors are vital, contributing members of their communities, and they're active and involved, and they have so much to offer. Not including them in the decision-making about the facility that they live in doesn't make any sense to me, so I'm so pleased that we are making this very explicit. Seniors have great suggestions, really unique perspectives, and we're much less if we don't, you know, support their contributions wholeheartedly.

As a social worker for many years what really excites me about this bill is the first guiding principle emphasizing that councils shall be person and family centred. These councils offer an important space for bringing issues of inclusion, diversity, and reconciliation into discussions about the care and quality of life. The reason that this is so important is that these facilities are people's homes. Everyone deserves to feel accepted and safe in their home.

One important reason for these councils is to support the LGBTQ seniors. Moving to a new residence should never force seniors to return to the closet, and they should never fear that they have to do so in order to be safe. This summer I had the honour of attending a

celebration in the Ashbourne assisted living facility here in Edmonton. They are the first seniors' community in Canada, here in Edmonton, Alberta, to be affirmed by the United Church as inclusive of seniors of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Ashbourne is boldly leading the way towards inclusivity, diversity, support, and acceptance for Alberta's LGBTQ seniors. The work they have done is exemplary.

Not every facility has been able to put in the same effort, however, and unfortunately that means that there are LGBTQ seniors who feel they are forced to return to the closet. Resident and family councils will ensure that seniors have a place to meaningfully engage with their concerns. The person- and family-centred guiding principle will ensure that that engagement supports the needs of seniors of all sexual orientations and gender identities. This is only one example of the ways that inclusion, diversity, and reconciliation in resident and family councils will help to make life better for Albertans who reside in facilities like seniors' lodges.

You know, not very long ago I was touring a facility in the Calgary area, and one of the things that the residents brought up to me was their concern about the decisions that were made in public spaces, so these are the lounges, maybe where they're having their meals together. They felt that they didn't have any input into those decisions. The chairs were quite large and cumbersome, and it was very difficult for some of the seniors to move them. Something even like that, you know, being able to influence and have people thinking about some of the challenges that the seniors might have – if the chairs are too big and cumbersome, they want to have more independence and be able to move them. Even things like that, them being able to contribute to these councils with their ideas.

3:50

Another thing that they said is that some of the items on display – like, there were display cases sort of in this lounge area. They had no input on what was in those display cases. It can be even as simple as that, but, I mean, still, that's significant. That is where people live.

Certainly, as I've travelled the province, the richness of the local communities is reflected in the lodges, and I would love that to be supported more. Like, you know, I was up in Falher this summer. That's known, of course, as the honey capital of Canada, and they have this very gigantic bee on display in their community, and this is a big part of their culture. There are lots of bee farmers in that area, so that impacts the people in the lodge and the decisions they make, and that's just one sort of local community aspect.

Religious and ethnic communities: they may be eating certain foods, have particular religious practices. The residents do want to be able to have input into that. Right here in Edmonton in my own riding, in Edmonton-Riverview, Canterbury Court serves seniors of all sorts of different backgrounds but through a Christian message of the Anglican Church. People need to have input into those kinds of decisions. It's so important that the seniors who live in these residences feel that they have the input, not only feel but they actually do have the input into making these decisions. You know, when you think of your own home, you have the ability to make decisions about your life there, what you have in your home. You have that freedom, and that shouldn't end when you move into a facility like a lodge.

This bill will give senior residents and their families a voice on those matters and protect their freedom wherever they call home. I have heard this from seniors all over our province, and I'm very thankful to the Minister of Health for hearing Albertans, too. I'm very happy to support Bill 22, and I strongly encourage all members to add their support for the resident and family councils as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other members who wish to speak to Bill 22? Oh, sorry. Under 29(2)(a) to the minister's presentation? No?

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert to close debate.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've heard from both sides of the House how this bill will really help residents in a wide variety of care situations. We've heard from the Member for St. Albert about what this means for the PDD community. We've heard from the Minister of Seniors and Housing, and, you know, we've heard from very many members on this bill about how this really helps to make life better for all Albertans.

With that, I would like to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 25

Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bill 25, the Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017, for second reading.

The Acting Speaker: You're moving it on behalf of the Minister of Labour?

Mr. Rosendahl: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Rosendahl: Madam Speaker, our forestry professionals do amazing work in our province to ensure the proper management of our forest land. Their work on education, research, conservation, reclamation, protection, renewal, and forest management planning is second to none. I can speak to that personally when we look at the first forest management agreement that was signed between the province and North Western Pulp & Power in 1957. We look at the work that they've done over the years in covering all those things that I just mentioned. It is great. The things that they've done have led the way in the way our forestry is done in the province today, and that's something that we can be very proud of.

Currently there are 1,600 professionals that identify as either a forest technologist or a forester. I'll tell you the difference between the two. A forester has a degree whereas a technologist has a diploma or a certificate. I suppose I might be able to fall into that category, being that I have forestry in my background plus wildlife management on top of that.

Madam Speaker, if passed, Bill 25 will amend the act to merge two regulatory colleges – this is the essence of the act – the College of Alberta Professional Foresters and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists, into one regulatory organization called the Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals. For both organizations these changes are a long time coming. Both colleges asked government to make these changes back in 2014. Membership holders in both organizations voted way in favour, more than 90 per cent, of merging before approaching Alberta Labour to officially request legislative amendments to do so. In fact, both organizations came together in 2015. They have been sharing an office and are already sporting their new name and logo. Put it this way: Bill 25 basically just makes it official.

Alberta Labour has worked closely with both organizations, consulting them regularly on the various proposed changes. In addition, these changes also have the strong support of the Alberta Forest Products Association, the voice for the forest product industry.

You might wonder if the scope of practice for forestry professionals remains the same. What does this merger actually mean? For starters, merging the two organizations into one body would eliminate any confusion around the two organizations that provide the same service, which they do. To make things simpler, the professions' governing regulations would also be consolidated from three to one. This will save both organizations valuable resources in time and money that are being directed at running two organizations, so it's a money-saving issue as well.

4:00

The amendment would also improve administrative and disciplinary processes to be more modern and efficient without sacrificing principles of fairness. Complaints that are levied against the member would move to a central governing committee instead of relying upon a single individual. The number of people on the committee would also increase, which would allow for work to be shared among the members, creating administrative efficiencies. The membership would continue to consist of the many industry professionals but now would also include public members who are residents of Alberta. These public members would add a level of oversight and public accountability that was previously not represented. It's important that we look at that idea.

The amendments would also allow the committee to continue an investigation into a complaint even though, say, a complaint had been withdrawn or even settled. Such an action, when warranted, would allow the committee to conduct further investigations if there are repeated offences by one member, better serving the public interest.

Madam Speaker, by consolidating these organizations into one governing body, there will be a strong and unified voice for our forestry professionals, the creation of one regulatory body removing confusion around two organizations offering the same service and the consolidation of the professions' governing legislation to an act supported by a single regulation as opposed to three current regulations, making things easier for government.

The amendments being proposed were requested by both organizations. They have had opportunity to review the changes, they are supportive, and they are excited to see this get done. As such, I ask all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 25, the Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act. Now, this act governs both the College of Alberta Professional Foresters and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists. These two organizations act as the professional regulatory organizations for the governance of professional foresters and professional forest technologists. The biggest difference between these two organizations is education. Foresters have a degree, and technologists have a diploma or a certificate.

The bill proposes a number of amendments to the Regulated Forestry Profession Act in order to implement the merger of the two professional bodies and create a single organization called the Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals. This

merger of organizations began with a memorandum of understanding back in 2013. In June 2014 both memberships voted overwhelmingly to proceed with a proposed merger. In fact, more than 80 per cent of foresters and 90 per cent of forest technologists who participated in the vote chose to vote in favour of the merger and changes to the act. This unification has been the culmination of years of dedicated work between these two organizations.

Consultation and approval were sought from both colleges' members prior to them approaching the Department of Labour and asking for the changes. This unity of organizations has already gone past the proposal level, and not only have these two entities reaffirmed this proposal year after year; they've already made inroads in combining several aspects of their organizations. These two organizations have been holding joint annual general meetings for the last several years. Additionally, they have also combined some administrative functions such as shared office space and organizational newsletters.

These groups have been very proactive with proceeding with the merger of the organizations. All that's needed is the change in legislation to allow for the formal merger of their professional organizations. Notification letters have already been sent to partners, which include the professional regulatory organizations and associations, postsecondary institutions, municipal stakeholders, government of Alberta ministries, provincial and territorial governments, and other forestry groups. This kind of notification gave all those parties lots of time to see that there was an intention to amend the act, and the fact is that none have come forward with concerns.

Should this legislation pass, these two entities, with a combined membership of 1,600, will now not only become one professional college and eliminate the confusion that goes with two similar organizations but will save costs associated with running separate organizations as well. Imagine that, Madam Speaker. An organization that finds ways to eliminate duplication services while actually saving money and becoming more efficient, a lesson that all governments could probably perhaps pay more than a casual glance.

But what about services and job losses? According to information we received, as these groups have been operating for one entity for some time, it is clear that no job losses are anticipated. Additionally, there will be no cost to the government as all expenses are incurred by the colleges, a win-win type of situation, for sure.

These proposed amendments would also improve the administrative and disciplinary process, modernizing it into a more efficient body, all the while without sacrificing the goal of fairness. The fact is that complaints levied against the member would now be moved to a central governing committee instead of relying upon a single individual. This can only increase the level of accountability and fairness. By increasing the number of people on the committee, it would therefore increase effectiveness by allowing work to be shared among members, thus creating administrative efficiency. Membership would continue to be made up of many industry professionals but now would also include public members from Alberta. These members would add a level of public oversight and accountability that the separate organizations simply don't have.

In a set-up similar to the Chartered Professional Accountants Act these proposed amendments would allow this new committee to continue an investigation into a complaint even though the complaint has been withdrawn or settled. Should such an action occur, when warranted, the committee could continue to conduct further investigations if there are repeated offences by one member, for example. This is not only in the public's best interests but helps ensure a fair and transparent process.

Madam Speaker, in Canada, of all of the provinces that regulate foresters and forest technologists, only Quebec continues to regulate through two separate organizations. These changes are clearly in line with what the two organizations have asked for and will bring us on par with other jurisdictions in Canada. With approval rates by the vast majority of both parties, a series of yearly reaffirmation votes, and an already high level of organizational interaction and co-operation, passing this act seems to me on the face as a no-brainer. When that many of a membership vote for a merger, who are we to stand in the way of democracy? Why, I haven't seen this level of co-operation among like-minded memberships that voted overwhelmingly in favour of unity since, well, July 22.

For these reasons, Madam Speaker, I plan to support this bill and what it will accomplish and encourage the members of the Assembly to do the same. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

4:10

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am proud to speak to you and through you to all of my fellow members in the House today to Bill 25, the Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017.

Madam Speaker, 2014 saw both the College of Alberta Professional Foresters as well as the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists come together to consolidate both colleges after members voted in favour of a merger, with an overwhelming 90 per cent support. The consolidation of both colleges would ensure not only support of a strong and unified voice for our province's forestry professionals but as well efficiencies that will save the organizations time and money.

The forestry professionals who ensure the very important work of the proper management of our forest land are absolutely second to none. Some of the important work the forestry professionals provide is in research, conservation, reclamation, protection, renewal, forestry management as well as education. I would like to extend gratitude to all of our forestry professionals for making life better for all Albertans today and into the future.

Madam Speaker, 2015 saw both the College of Alberta Professional Foresters and the College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists merge into one regulatory organization, the Association of Alberta Forest Management Professionals. For the past two years they have been sharing office space under their new name and logo. Both organizations have worked closely with the Ministry of Labour, and Bill 25, Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, would ensure that the very important work of the regulatory organizations continues for the well-being, safety, and public interest of all Albertans.

Madam Speaker, the amendments proposed were requested by both organizations, and by merging these organizations into one, it will remove any marketplace confusion around two organizations offering the same outstanding services. At this time I would like to encourage all in the House to support the amendments, which would create a single regulatory entity for our forest professionals.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate on behalf of the hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, I thank all the members who spoke on this important bill. With that, I move to close debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a second time]

Bill 23

Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017

[Adjourned debate November 7: Mr. Westhead]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane to close debate.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've had a great discussion on this bill, and I'm happy to get to a vote.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a second time]

Bill 24

An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances

[Adjourned debate November 7: Ms Ganley]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 24? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 24, An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances. As I rise to speak about this bill, I want to acknowledge the leadership of my fellow LGBTQ-plus MLAs, members of the LGBTQ-plus community, their parents and allies in ensuring that our schools are a welcoming, caring, and safe place to learn for all students and members of the staff. I also want to acknowledge the pain, exclusion, and vicious comments that members of the LGBTQ-plus community have endured in our schools and communities.

The reason that GSAs in our schools have been successful and have been established is because of the leadership of the students who have advocated, worked for, and ensured that objections to their establishment were overturned. Thank you to the student leaders, their sponsors, teachers, and supportive administration that worked together to create the safe, supportive spaces that GSAs are. Thank you, too, to allies such as altView, la Fédération de la jeunesse albertaine, and ISMSS, who have supported the students and helped in providing materials and education within our schools.

Another group that has made the presence of GSAs in our schools supportive has been parents, parents who have sought information, supported groups, marched in pride parades, walked with their children in their development, and provided love and support throughout that path.

One such parent who has really impressed me is Lindsay Peace, the mother of Ace Peace, who spoke at the press conference announcing Bill 24. Ms Peace said:

As a parent I understand that I want to know what my kids are doing. I want to know who they are hanging out with, what activities they are engaging in. I want to know the decisions they

are making. Because it's important to me, I talk to them. I ask them. Over all else, I create and maintain an open dialogue with them and a sense of safety and security. If for some reason one of my children didn't feel that they could come to me with anything, then I believe that is a reflection on me. That's my bad, and I would need to look at doing things differently.

In the meantime I would be grateful if they felt that they could turn to a teacher. The more folks who support my kids and are committed to their health and well-being can only be a positive thing. Also, I think it's important to point out that it's not an either/or situation. Ultimately, I believe that we are working together, parents and educators.

When it comes to GSAs, specifically to the outing of students, I think that there is a misunderstanding that means that parents will never find out, that this will be some sort of dirty little secret between the student and the school forever. I have heard dozens of accounts from families in which it was teachers who helped their students disclose their queer identity to their families. I know a former student whose teacher helped him write a letter to his parents to tell them he was trans. I know many kids who are queer who spent a long time at their GSA until they became confident enough in themselves to have a conversation with their parents.

I also know that GSAs teach allies how to be better allies, how to be better people. I know that kids learn a greater understanding of the adversity faced by their peers and learn compassion. GSAs allow students an opportunity to be a part of creating positive change. Although I do know as a parent how great it is to hear that our kids are wonderful and doing amazing things, I certainly don't believe that anyone needs to be outed for doing so.

I really want to thank Ms Lindsay Peace and other parents who have loved and continue to love their kids unconditionally and have established an open dialogue.

4:20

I want to address the whole issue of parental authority and responsibility and decision-making for their children. Children are a gift, and as parents we want all the best for our children. We want to save them from hardships, pain, rejection, and isolation. We as parents demonstrate through our actions and through our words the values and ethics that we hold.

I wanted to tell you a little bit about those values that parents have. I'm sure that as parents we have all been in a situation where we find that our kids take our dinner conversation and repeat that to their friends, right? I think that's how parents influence their children. We instill in our children a sense of their heritage, the community that they are a part of, and our hopes for their future.

Our role as parents is to support and empower our students so that our students, our children make the best choices that they believe are best for them, make the choices that they have explored based on their interests, be it their careers, friends, sexual identity, gender expression. We can help and guide them by supporting and by getting information, talking to other adults. We cannot make the choice for them. Our children are not our possessions. We have to as parents believe in their ability to move towards adulthood and choice-making.

The bill does not lessen parental authority. Bill 24 does not lessen parental authority. Parental authority comes from the dialogue and openness we have with our children, that have been gifted to us. It is our role to provide our children with a safe place, an open conversation, and a supportive home.

Now I want to address my friends in the faith community, particularly in the evangelical spectrum. As a member of that community I understand the difficulty to address social justice issues in our community and the changing values. I still remember when in

churches men wore suits and ties and women wore skirts. It is rare now to see men in suits and ties in the churches, and even preachers wear casual clothes.

Not long ago single moms were pariahs in our congregation, shunned, prevented from leadership positions, and impeded within our churches and society. This has changed.

Not long ago divorce was frowned upon, actively discouraged even in abusive situations, and divorcees were prevented from remarriage or leadership roles within our church.

Women have long been prevented from leadership in most church communities as preachers, pastors, and on the board of elders. While this is changing, there are still too many places where gifted women are prevented from exercising their God-given gifts.

I could also mention how churches haven't been very good around accepting the poor and the homeless on Sunday morning.

It was also not too long ago that our churches supported slavery, segregation, and apartheid. It took courageous, prophetic leaders to actively call the Christian community to account for their role in supporting apartheid and segregation. We all know the names of Dr. Martin Luther King, Bishop Tutu, Father Berrigan, among others.

Other courageous, prophetic leaders are now calling for the church to stop the exclusion of the LGBTQ-plus community. One of these leaders is Tony Campolo, well known for his books, preaching ministry, social justice activism, and as a professor at a well-known evangelical seminary. Dr. Campolo said:

One reason I am changing my position on [LGBTQ acceptance in the church is that] . . . as a social scientist, I have concluded that sexual orientation is almost never a choice and I have seen how damaging it can be to try to "cure" someone from being gay. As a Christian, my responsibility is not to condemn or reject gay people, but rather to love and embrace them and to endeavor to draw them into the fellowship of the Church.

And for them to be married, too, he adds.

When we sing the old invitation hymn, *Just As I Am*, I want us to mean it, and I want my gay and lesbian brothers and sisters to know it is true for them too.

So if Dr. Campolo provides this kind of leadership, I think it's really time here in Alberta that we accept this. There are many others who, like Dr. Campolo, have prayed, read, and engaged in conversations and soul-searching to bring them to the place of full acceptance of the LGBTQ-plus community.

I would like to encourage members of the faith community who are reluctant to explore full acceptance of the LGBTQ-plus community to prayerfully consider their theological perspective on this issue and their reluctance to support this bill. Bill 24 does not negate parental love, acceptance, and the supportive guidance role of a parent. It does not give the government or schools authority over our children, as members opposite have claimed. All it does is to confirm that our young people have the right to attend any club activity under the jurisdiction of their school that they choose to without being outed to their parents. It is also clear that sponsoring teachers, principals will exercise their duties under the teaching profession to ensure the safety of students under their care and, in the case of potential harm to the student or to others, contact parents and the relevant other professionals.

Participating in a GSA is not a discipline issue, where teachers and principals contact parents and guardians and discuss potential consequences of the action. I still remember the time when I was called by one of my son's principals and told that he had lit firecrackers in a garbage can and about the consequences of his expulsion. Participating in a GSA should be viewed as a regular club at school that provides a safe place for students to participate in activities, explore their sexual identity, and get support for how

they may possibly disclose their exploration to the significant adults in their lives in their own time and in their own way.

As a parent we often do not agree with or understand the choices our kids make such as what they eat – such as my kid and no veggies – how they spend their money, what they decide to study, whom they choose to date. Some parents might not agree with their child participating in a chess club, a sewing club, or the theatre, but sponsor teachers in these clubs do not phone parents and tell them their child is involved. A club does not teach curriculum. This is why it's called extracurricular. It provides a fun place for students to pursue their passion and share that passion with others, including the adult teachers involved.

I am also pleased that the bill clarifies the role of the principal and his power in authorizing a GSA or a club. Students seeking to start a club need to have clear information as to who can support the establishment of the club, who they can go to to find a room, a sponsor teacher, and administrative support. They don't need to have the runaround in trying to figure out who can give the authority.

I am also pleased that the bill clarifies that the establishment of a GSA, from section 45.1 of the act, applies to all schools who have public funding. This will ensure that every single school in Alberta that receives public dollars has a policy that clearly allows students to form a gay-straight alliance and makes that policy publicly available.

The minister has also clarified that section 50.1 of the School Act, which currently states that parents may be notified of instructional time that focuses on topics related to religion and human sexuality, does not apply to GSAs. Parents can continue to choose that they're pulled from these curriculum lessons but not GSAs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge all members of this House to think of this bill in supporting young people in our schools and communities by providing them a safe place to discuss their sexuality. I know that if GSAs had been in my sons' schools, I would not have been upset if they had participated in GSAs, and I would have encouraged it. This is not a bill that removes parental authority. It is not a bill that is not respectful of persons of faith. It is just a bill that clarifies school authorities' roles and responsibilities and ensures that students are the ones that decide who they tell, in their own time and in their own way, about their sexuality.

As a parent I have been blessed with the gift of two boys who were named to remind me of God's gift. I am so thankful to be part of a government that has done so much to strengthen support for the LGBTQ-plus students in the province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 24, and I want to thank my hon. colleague the Minister of Education for bringing this legislation forward.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. minister, are you speaking under 29(2)(a), questions or comments?

Miranda: No. It's not a question. Sorry.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry, Minister.

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie, followed by the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

4:30

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances. Before I begin, I think it's absolutely necessary to correct some misinformation that has been circulating with respect to the United Conservatives, our position on this bill, and GSAs in general. To be perfectly clear, we fully support GSAs and believe that they are an important tool to support students who may be going through a difficult time. In other words, we know that GSAs can and have saved lives. In fact, Bill 10, the legislation protecting students' rights to form a GSA, was passed in this House with unanimous support from both of the UCP's legacy caucuses' members. Suggestions that the UCP is not in favour of GSAs are offensive and quite simply false. The buck stops here today.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, the United Conservatives do not support the mandatory notification of parents regarding their children's involvement in GSAs, nor have we ever suggested that gay kids be outed to their parents or to anyone else, for that matter.

It must be said that attempts by the government to equate a vote against this legislation with a vote against GSAs, LGBTQ kids, or the LGBTQ community are particularly shameful. It's shameful because such false equivalencies are just that. They are false. It's also shameful because once again we see that the NDP are using children and youth as pawns in a political game. Not only that, Madam Speaker, many of these kids are vulnerable, and they're at risk. Do you think it benefits them in any way to turn on the TV and the news or open a newspaper and see members of the NDP falsely claim that United Conservatives want to hurt them and would delight in doing so?

I can assure you that this is overblown and completely misleading rhetoric, and it isn't good for anyone, least of all the kids that this legislation is attempting to help. I would encourage the members opposite to raise the bar a little and argue their case based on the merits of the legislation rather than using fearmongering, personal smears, and outright lies.

Madam Speaker, we do not take any piece of proposed legislation lightly.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I believe the Government House Leader has a point of order.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

Mr. Mason: I wish to rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. The citation could be any number of things, but 23(h), (i), and (j) will do. The hon. member has just suggested that members of our government and our caucus have lied with respect to the position of the UCP with regard to their position on GSAs. That is a clear violation of the rules. Moreover, it is not true, so I would ask that you rule and that the hon. member withdraw the comment and apologize to the House.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Obviously, none of us have the Blues, but I believe the hon. member was reading off text, so I'll do my best to read it back to you: do you think it any way benefits them to turn on the news or the newspaper "and see members of the NDP falsely claim that United Conservatives want to hurt them and would delight in doing so?"

Well, I think we heard, just before the noon break, a member from the government side actually say those things, and the whole point of this paragraph is to point out that that's incorrect. That's

not how we feel about it. We might have a difference of opinion here, but surely we have not only the right but the responsibility to correct the record when we've had false motives applied to us, and that falls under 23(h), (i), and (j), too.

I believe there's no point of order here. I think the Government House Leader might be a little embarrassed by the remarks of his member, but his member's remarks actually require us to correct the record.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, it is not unparliamentary to criticize statements as being contrary to the facts, which is what I believe the hon. member was saying.

Mr. Mason: She said "lie."

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, I don't have the Blues in front of me at this time, and I didn't hear that.

At this point I will say that it's a debate around the facts. However, I would like to caution both sides of the House at this time.

Hon. member, would you like to correct your comments?

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, I do apologize. The word "lie" was used in the sentence that I read. I certainly do apologize, and I will withdraw that comment.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Please continue.

Debate Continued

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, the United Conservative caucus does not take any piece of proposed legislation lightly. We carefully review it, we ask questions, and we wonder if it can be improved. We also look at each piece of legislation with an eye to determining if it has forged the right balance for Albertans of differing views.

This, then, is where we find ourselves when we look at Bill 24. When we look at the bill before us, it's interesting to note that the bill that first addressed GSAs was passed by this House in 2015, two years ago, so it is natural to ask why we are looking at updating the provisions today. When Bill 10 was reviewed and debated in the House just a few years ago, the NDP was in opposition at the time, and it did not propose the kinds of amendments that we are seeing come forward here in Bill 24 today. So why introduce them now?

This NDP government has had control over the legislative agenda for two and a half years. It could have brought this bill forward any time during that period, but they never took the opportunity to do so. It is most curious, Madam Speaker. This government first started talking about this bill just a short month ago. Prior to that, not a single word. There was no push from outside of this province either as far as other provinces updating their legislation. No one else is doing this, not even Ontario. In fact, there does not appear to be any similar legislation anywhere in Canada.

It is possible, Madam Speaker, that the NDP has decided to introduce this legislation now for political reasons. It could be. If that is the motive, this is a major concern because, as I mentioned earlier, it means that the NDP government is attempting to use children as political pawns to distract Albertans from the real issues, the NDP's incredibly poor handling of the economy. We know that public support for them is falling, and we know that Albertans continue to suffer from their fiscal policies, fiscal policies that will, by the way, put us \$90 billion in debt in just a few short years. Imagine that: Alberta, once the envy of the G-8, in desperate financial mire.

Then, like a magician using a sleight of hand, they bring forward legislation that will divert attention from the main issues that all Albertans are concerned about. What is that issue? It's quite simple. Will I keep my job, or will it disappear? Will my child get a job when they graduate next year? How will I pay the bills if I lose my job? Do you see a common thread here? Albertans are concerned about everyday, real-life issues, and that is why they want their government to focus on them.

But this bill is before us, and like the good legislators that we are, we will do our jobs. We will look at it with an eye to determining if it truly reflects Albertans and if it accomplishes what it seeks to do.

There are some issues in Bill 24 that are worth highlighting. Let me say again that peer supports, antibullying groups such as GSAs can and do play an important role in our province. Our society in just a few short years has come a long way in recognizing that we all have a responsibility to deal with bullying.

4:40

As legislators we have a great responsibility to protect our children, all children. We must, however, be careful that we do not use our positions to put up barriers for loving parents who want and need to play important roles in protecting their children. What could be more natural than parents wanting to be involved with their children? What?

Being a parent is not an easy job – I know – and it often gets harder as children grow into teenagers. Schools seek to keep parents involved with their children because they know it is a challenging time for them, and the students need all the support that is available to them. That is why we have professional educators who not only teach; they can act as valued counsellors for children, and they care. They really do. Which one of us can't think back to a teacher who took a special interest in us to help us through a difficult time? These teachers also forge relationships with parents because they know that involvement is important for both the child and the parent.

That brings me to another concern with Bill 24. You see, it prevents teachers, principals, and counsellors from involving parents when their child is experiencing difficulties. This part of the bill is worth a full public discussion. Parents should be aware of it and have the ability to weigh in. Remember when I said that it is the job of legislators to find a balance? This is one of those times.

Another aspect of this bill that is problematic is that it makes no distinction between a five-year-old child and one who is 17. Parents need to understand that this law would treat the decisions of a five-year-old the same as a teenager. Surely this kind of approach is worth full public discussion. We need to understand why it's been included and adjust it if parents disagree with it. Why should we as politicians make decisions that are best left to parents and trusted educators?

The third concern is that the bill proposes that section 50.1(1), which ensures that a school receives parental consent before teaching sexual content, will no longer apply to extracurricular activities. It's a new change. In other words, subjects that cannot be taught during school hours without parental permission could be taught after school and without their knowledge.

As you can see, we are concerned that politicians do not overreach on Bill 24. We need to involve parents and educators and young people in this full public discussion. That is the best way of creating legislation, legislation that works for all Albertans. Please consider my words today.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to – oh, 29(2)(a). My apologies. Comments or questions?

Seeing none, I will now call on the Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 24. I want to of course thank my hon. colleague the Minister of Education for bringing this legislation forward. I admit that I am not entirely happy to debate this issue because I had thought that the days where the debate was permeated by misguided opinions about the LGBTQ community were a thing of the past, but here we are.

Now, admittedly, we have come a long way when it comes to treating all Albertans with respect regardless of their gender identity or gender expression. In my Ministry of Culture and Tourism, for example, we have made huge strides. We are growing LGBTQ tourism and promoting the province's destinations and attractions to LGBTQ travellers. I've also had the opportunity to represent Alberta at the LGBTQ-plus Service Providers' Summit in Ottawa. And, of course, we continue to openly and proudly raise the pride and transgender flags every year at government buildings to celebrate LGBTQ rights, inclusion, and acceptance, inviting students to attend as well. We do this because visibility matters, and it is an important part of progress. Our voices help to celebrate our successes, our diversity, and also highlight the continued challenges faced by our community.

Progress is indeed something that we should celebrate; however, we must also recognize that outdated views still exist in our province. You don't have to look very far or too hard to find those who are unable to make up their minds as to whether outing gay kids is okay. To be clear, it is never okay.

Personally, I wish there had been a Minister of Education around when I was in school because I think my school years would have been a lot easier. With the sense of isolation that is created within you when you are struggling with many, many issues that are coming to the forefront, having to suffer in silence and not feeling like you actually have anybody who could understand you, finding somebody who could actually just listen without any judgment is something that I think all of us pray for. Personally, I can attest to many, many days and nights where I struggled and looked for people who would give me that support and allow me to be able to express the many things that were going on in my mind.

Quite frankly, I think that having a GSA when I was growing up would have made my life so much easier, so today I stand here very proudly to see that this government is taking steps to ensure that that happens for students in our province. Every student deserves to have a school that is welcoming and caring and a safe place to learn. Gay-straight alliances help students, and in some cases GSAs can help save lives. This legislation, if passed, will strengthen the supports for students who wish to create or join a gay-straight alliance in their schools.

It is also worth noting that this danger is compounded for kids who are also new immigrants. You can imagine that this is something that I take very close to home for me, because being an immigrant is challenging. Not only do you have to adapt to a new way of life and how to fit into your new home, as an LGBTQ newcomer you also have to deal with the issues of gender identity and gender expression, that compound that experience. Of course, coming to a new country, often with limited grasp of language and having to adjust to a new culture, is emotionally, physically, and spiritually very taxing. It is a trauma that has a lasting impact, especially with somebody who is struggling to come to terms with that sexuality.

Coming out is not an easy experience for many. Most of us struggle for many years because a closet is a very lonely and awful place to be. Madam Speaker, you might be familiar with the online campaign It Gets Better, with videos from members of the LGBTQ community telling teens who are in school who are suffering not to lose hope because things get better after, of course, coming into a community, perhaps graduating and going on to adulthood. The thing is that as much as I like that message and as much as I see the importance of it, my question remains: why should you have to wait until you leave school for things to get better? Why do you have to struggle in silence? Quite frankly, there is no need for that.

Being different should be celebrated, but instead you face constant threats, threats like being outed before you are ready, exposing you to all kinds of pressures, all kinds of issues. There are dangers. As you know, we've talked about the issue of the increased risk for homelessness, things that deal with mental health and self-harm. All of these things are elevated in this community. Of course, it's not exclusive to it, but these are the things that this community has to deal with. All of these threats, including the threat of physical violence, are the things that this community and these kids have to deal with. Why not give them the space to have those discussions? Why not surround them with people who will love and support them and give them the strength to be able to face their days not only with pride but also with a sense of belonging and being part of a community that is there to support them?

GSA's, in fact, offer students a safe place to simply be themselves and be surrounded by those who will care for them on a daily basis. Now, as a parent I would wish nothing less for my kids. Who would not want their kids to have peers around them who will help them to grow up in every possible way and look out for them? What parent wouldn't be proud to see that their kid is the kind of person who stands up for their friends and who would join a GSA to look after their LGBTQ friends and stand up for them? I certainly would be among those people, and I think many people in Alberta would as well.

4:50

Now, I remember how things used to be in this province. I have the added right of being the oldest among the three of us LGBTQ MLAs in this Legislature, and I do remember things about this province, growing up as an LGBTQ person, that were not always pleasant. I remember not having experiences but having heard from those who were in the first pride parades, for example, having to wear paper bags over their faces because they knew that if they were out in a photograph and people found out who they were, they could potentially not only face violence but lose their jobs, lose their homes, and perhaps even additional consequences, all of which meant that they just couldn't be themselves.

It's not the kind of province that I want to go back to. That's not the kind of province I want my kids to grow up in. Having this legislation in place will ensure that when we go forward, every single child in this province can feel safe and secure in the knowledge that they can join a GSA in their schools and that they're going to find people in those schools who are going to support them and give them all the tools that they need to be able to not just thrive but succeed in every aspect of their life.

Now, as a member of the LGBTQ community I can tell you and all of the members here that it's simply not enough to show up, or perhaps not, in some cases, at pride parades wearing rainbow T-shirts to get your picture taken and put it out on social media. It's simply, quite frankly, not enough, for example, to go to wonderful places like Grande Prairie Pride and celebrate, and it's not enough to show up at the pride Shabbat dinner at Temple B'nai Tikvah in Calgary to break bread with the community and profess to

supporting the community. These gestures are simply not enough if you do not come to this Legislature to stand up and defend those same principles of inclusion and diversity that you seem to profess. Without those actions, those gestures are simply hollow and without any meaning whatsoever.

That is why I'm here today, to say to the LGBTQ community of our province: you matter, you are loved, and your diversity is embraced by this government. I am here to say to the students of our province that you will not be outed before you are ready because every single one of the members of this government is going to ensure that that does not happen to you. That's why I'm here supporting this legislation. It lays out the clear steps that must be taken to provide safe and caring places to learn for all students regardless of their gender identity or gender expression. I am proud to work in a government that is doing that, that is going to strengthen the supports for LGBTQ students in our province, every day making their lives better. I'm here to support legislation that will protect our students and ensure that they have safe, caring, welcoming, and loving places for them to simply learn, grow, and thrive.

I thank you all and ask you all to vote in favour of this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the minister for such an impassioned speech. I really appreciate it.

One of the things I wanted to comment on – and I do have a question for the minister – is that my daughter is in grade 11, and my daughter is part of the GSA at her school. The way I found out that my daughter is part of that GSA is the same way that I found out my daughter is part of the Harry Potter club. She told me. She came to me as a parent, and she let me know that she wanted to be there to support her friends and be part of that group because she wants that safe and inclusive environment. So my question to the minister becomes: what would that have meant to you as a child growing up in your school to have friends who could meet you and be part of this environment with you?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, and thank you, Member, for the question. I think that for me it would have meant having had less time hiding and figuring out ways to avoid facing a schoolyard that wasn't the friendliest of places to be, with people not necessarily being nice to you, and spending more time learning and more time growing as a person. I think it would have given me the opportunity to simply thrive in different ways. I didn't have the opportunity to do that, unfortunately. Quite frankly, there are some of us who have never hidden who we are, and sometimes those kinds of things created situations in which you were, you know, bullied for many, many reasons. I think that having had a club like this would have meant that I would have been in a safe environment where I would have been able to just simply learn, thrive, and grow as a person. I think it would have been a magical experience, similar to the Harry Potter club perhaps, because it simply would have been nothing that would have created any sense of shame. It wouldn't have been anything that would have created any sense of isolation. It would have simply been just like any other club, something that would have allowed me to experience and be with peers that just wanted to hang out with me and be friends with me. So it would have meant a lot.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other comments or questions under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to enthusiastically, loudly, and proudly support Bill 24. That shouldn't be all that difficult in 2017, to stand up for a bill that does nothing more than protect fundamental human rights, the fundamental human rights of students in this province to live the lives that they were born to live, to live the lives they choose to live, and to do so in safety.

One of the points of discussion and debate on this bill has been whether we should trust parents to do the right thing, whether we should trust teachers to make the right assessments of safety and danger to children in schools. The vast, vast, vast majority of parents in our province are loving, caring, responsible parents, but this bill protects children who, unfortunately, don't have those parents. That's not a lot, but it's a lot more than zero. How do we know who those parents are? We don't know that, and while I have tremendous, tremendous respect for Alberta's teachers, it is not within their purview to make that determination. They can't always know what's happening at home. I don't think any teacher can say that they always know what's happening at home, so there is tremendous risk to LGBTQ2S-plus students in this province if they are outed without their permission.

This is about fundamental human rights, as I've said. What GSAs do is create a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe, inclusive environment for all students. There's very clear research that shows that LGBTQ students are more likely to feel safe and are more comfortable about being open in their sexual orientation, exploring gender identity and gender expression, in schools with GSAs or QSAs because they provide that place to create a sense of belonging. That, again, shouldn't be a tremendously controversial statement. Like for the Member for Stony Plain, my daughter is a member of a GSA. I know that because she told me in her time, in her way, that that was important to her, to be an ally, to explore who she is in this world. We are able to have that conversation – I'm getting a tiny bit emotional – because that's the relationship we have, and I cherish that more than I can express in words.

I think that's the situation for the vast majority of children, and that's a wonderful, wonderful thing. But that's not the situation for all children. The risks are clear. Between 25 and 40 per cent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. That is a shocking and sobering and frightening statistic. GSAs help those students, ensure that they have a chance at a better education because they are focused on their studies, not focused on what might happen at home should someone out them without their permission. It has a tremendous positive impact on their academic performance. They have higher self-esteem, greater school achievement, improved attendance, increased sense of empowerment and hope. They make new friendships. They have improved home and school relationships. They're more comfortable being visible as LGBTQ or allies. They have reduced their stress due to hiding one's identity, increased confidence, and enhanced sense of pride.

5:00

Madam Speaker, this is the lived reality of members of this Assembly, and I want to recognize and honour those members of this Assembly who shared that lived experience with us. It takes a tremendous amount of bravery to do that, and I just want them to know that I believe very much that the positive impact they've had on our community hasn't gone unnoticed. Who knows what's going to happen in the next election? Who knows what's going to happen next week? We have no idea. But I know and I want those members to know that the impact that they've had on our community, on

LGBTQ youth in particular, is tremendously positive. It's a remarkable, wonderful legacy of their time as members. Long may it continue, but know that you have made a tremendous contribution.

I do want to make some comments about some of the words I've heard in opposition to this bill, which, again, I find mind boggling, that we would actually in 2017 even be debating such a thing, but here we are. There have been mentions by the hon. Education critic for the UCP that in his time as a teacher he would have interesting and challenging discussions about basketball with the students' parents or perhaps appropriate dress, hats and T-shirts and such. It stuns me to think that that's somehow comparable to gender identity and the struggles that a teenager may be having. That's chalk and cheese. Those are completely, utterly different things. There's not much risk that a child is going to be kicked out of the home for their love of basketball. That's a completely, completely different thing.

You know, just earlier today the Member for Airdrie talked about the economic impact that we as legislators ought to be dealing with, the challenging job situation, debt and deficit issues that are facing our province, and those are very important issues. Undeniably, they're very important issues. But surely to goodness this Legislature should be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. These things are not mutually exclusive. It's not that we can't address the human side and the economic side at the same time.

But if we'd like to address the economic side through GSAs, why don't we do that? In British Columbia there's research that found that gay-straight alliance clubs save a school as much as \$70,000 a year in health-related costs and prevent as many as seven suicide attempts. That's just remarkable. The human impact of a GSA is well known. We know that. There's also an economic impact. There's absolutely no reason not to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion to my brief remarks here at second reading, it is silly to suggest that this bill is only a political wedge, a political ploy. It is a bill that fulfills what the Alberta Party has been calling for. It protects some of the most vulnerable students in our society who need our help and protection. It shouldn't be that difficult in 2017 to say that it's not okay to discriminate against LGBTQ2S-plus children.

By the way, there is such a thing as teenagers who are LGBTQ. That's a fact. That's a fundamental, simple fact, and some of those students are at risk. The job of us in this Assembly as legislators is to protect those who are at risk. That is our job. We have a very simple job in this case before us because the bill, I think, does a very, very good job of it. All people, all students deserve that respect. They deserve that protection. They deserve us to pass Bill 24.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a), comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Bill 24, and I want to talk a little bit about why I support this bill.

I grew up in rural Alberta. I went to high school a little over 20 years ago. I know that I don't look it, but it's true. Here's the thing, Madam Speaker. The first place I ever met a gay person was through church. The Anglican Church taught me as a teenager that an open-hearted expression of faith recognizes that our human spirit can only be fulfilled by honouring our love for one another. It is a part of our community, but I learned very young that it's also part

of our individual liberty and our individual agency to make our own way in this world as we become who we are, through that process, when we're youth and when we're teenagers.

I want to thank the Anglican Church of Canada, who taught me that foundational lesson, and I want to say that explicitly because I did not learn that lesson in school. I think my school environment can only be really described as aggressively homophobic, Madam Speaker. There was fighting. There was partying. There was exclusion. There was bullying. This was, you know, 20 or 25 years ago, and many of my colleagues who are my age identify with that. They remember that that was what school was like for so many kids. Things have changed a lot but not everywhere and not for everyone.

From my high school experience, I remember that anyone who didn't fit in did not have a good time at school, and they did not get to learn like I did. They did not have the same privileges as those of us who were allies to LGBT or queer youth. They just didn't, and you could see it. You could see it every day. Suicide, attempted suicide swirled around us as teenagers. I remember that keeping an eye on our friends was normal, grasping around for help for some of our friends who were at risk, who were vulnerable youth, trying to find counsellors or get a plan.

This was also at the time of the early '90s with a bunch of Education cutbacks, Madam Speaker. I remember as a 16-year-old trying to help my friends. I don't know how much easier that work would have been with a peer-to-peer support group that I and my friends could have joined. I'm going to imagine that it would have been a lot easier. But trying to put together a plan and muddle your way through those difficult questions as a 16-year-old: they are some of my most foundational memories. It's some of the foundational pain of my life that for one of my friends we didn't pull together a plan and we didn't succeed and we didn't have the help that we needed from a peer-to-peer support group, and I think of that often.

I also think often of the first person who ever came out to me, Madam Speaker. I called him the other day. I asked his permission to share this story. I'm not going to share his name. I don't have to. He was 17. We were in grade 12. I was 17 as well. He was one of my closest male friends. I remember using our rotary telephones to make arrangements to hang out, to go for coffee, to laugh until we were giddy. We were friends. I will never forget, after a certain period of time, him averting his eyes when he finally said to me: "You know what? I'm actually gay." Then he turned to me, and he actually looked me in the eye and said: "You cannot tell anyone, Shannon. They will kill me."

That was 25 years ago. When we spoke a couple of weeks ago, this time on a cellphone, Madam Speaker, I asked him if I could tell his story in support of this bill. I said: "You know, it was a long time ago, wasn't it? It was 25 years ago." Then we both said in unison, "Yeah, but it hasn't changed that much for lots of kids."

5:10

I've heard people asking: why are we doing this now? Why this bill now? Why Bill 24 right now? I think the first thing is that there's been confusion around parental notification, confusion created by conservatives. We've cleared that up, Madam Speaker. Why now? Because there's been politicization of this issue by conservatives who don't know their minds on this topic, who can't quite figure it out, that this is about protecting kids. We've put a stop to that, too. Why now? Because Jason Kenney has threatened to out gay kids. That's why now.

As a parent I find it helpful that my kids will have access to the kinds of peer-to-peer supports that I wish I had had. As an MLA, Madam Speaker, I am grateful that our teachers, our school board officials will have clear rules on how to deal with these issues.

As an MLA, Madam Speaker, I represent parents of queer youth that are going to want to have those services and those clubs in schools. I represent queer youth themselves. When I tour youth emergency services, there are rainbows and triangles everywhere, denoting that it is a safe and inclusive space. I represent those queer youth who end up in those services because they have been cast out of their homes in southern Alberta. I also as an MLA represent schoolteachers, administrators, assistants, counsellors who appreciate having these clear rules of engagement around gay-straight and queer-straight alliances. That's why now.

Madam Speaker, no young person should ever end their coming out experience with the phrase: don't tell anyone; they will kill me. No kid should scramble for help. No kid should grasp for a safe space. This bill, Bill 24, fixes that gap.

There is no excuse for inaction. There is no excuse of politics or expediency or for fundraising off a hard-right partisan base that needs this kind of dog whistle to rouse it. There is no excuse not to vote for this bill. Those who build their policies on these excuses trade on the fear that I saw in my friend's eyes 25 years ago. They want us to go back to that world. We're not going back, Madam Speaker. We're not going back to rotary telephones. We're not going back to flailing around for support for vulnerable youth. We're not going back to normalizing hate or violence or exclusion or bullying based on gender or sexual orientation.

Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, with this New Democrat government, we are only moving forward with love, with a feeling of great duty of care to one another, with solidarity, with trust, and with nurturing the great diversity of our human family, particularly as that diversity expresses itself in young people. That is what Bill 24 does, and that is why I rise in favour of this bill this afternoon.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances. We've heard from many people today on this bill, from teachers, and from LGBTQ caucus members, and I'm going to speak this afternoon from the perspective of a parent of school-aged children, the toughest job we'll ever have, even tougher than an MLA if you can believe that.

Madam Speaker, my wife, Sarah, and I, like all good parents, like to be involved in all aspects of our children's lives inside and outside of school. We know who their friends are; we know their friends' parents; we know what homework they have, what homework they've done, what homework they haven't done; and we participate in deciding what extracurricular activities they participate in and become their designated chauffeurs, of course. As much as we are involved in every aspect of our children's lives, Madam Speaker, and as much as we want them to tell us about all their victories and all their sorrows and all their troubles and disappointments, no matter how much you tell your children, especially teenagers, that they can tell you anything, the anxiety of some topics will not allow them to muster the courage to do so.

Now, here's the thing, Madam Speaker. If my children come to me and they realize they have an understanding that they are LGBTQ in spite of the fact that Sarah and I have created a family dynamic that supports open discourse and support for LGTBQ rights, that still may not be enough for them to feel comfortable coming out to us. I will not see that as a failure in our parenting, but

I will be grateful that they will have the support of a GSA in their school, a safe place where they have peer support and understanding. Perhaps most importantly, they will know that neither their teacher nor Mr. Kenney will be calling me to let me know that they joined a GSA.

Madam Speaker, GSAs save lives, and maybe one of those lives will be my Mehna or my Kieran. That just got to me a bit. Sorry. In addition, I don't see GSAs as taking away my right as a parent. I actually see it as giving my children rights. Most importantly, it gives them a safety net in case they are feeling that they're falling.

Now, I'm very concerned about the attitude coming from across the way in regard to their position that teachers are in the best position to understand what's best for all children. As I just explained, Madam Speaker, I know what's best for my children, and what's best is to have an open, supportive household that elicits dialogue. What I also think is best is to allow kids to come out to their parents on their own timeline, not a teacher's and not the leader of an ultra right-wing party.

I get a real sense, Madam Speaker, that my fellow parents on the other side believe that they would have failed as parents if their children joined a GSA and did not tell them, and that is simply not the case. They have failed as parents if they force exposure on joining a GSA upon their children. I believe the opposition's position on GSAs is at the very least demonstrating zero knowledge of LGBTQ issues, and this will not help anyone's children.

Madam Speaker, I grew up in a very ethnically diverse community in Toronto, and for us there race was not an issue, and I can't necessarily say that about the generation before me.

However, I do believe we still had some misunderstanding about LGBTQ issues, but of course that changed as we got older and went to university and we met more people. The fact of the matter is that times change, and we have to keep up with them, and a big part of that change is a move towards a more inclusive society. Unfortunately, we're not there, because if we were, there may not even be a need for GSAs.

I know we want to be the wise ones as parents, Madam Speaker, but the reality is that I have learned so much from the young people in my riding and in my office about LGBTQ and trans issues over the last few years, and I would implore the opposition to do the same. Spend some time talking to millennials, who have an unprecedented acceptance of LGBTQ rights. I am so proud of these kids today. They are creating a better and a more accepting world, and I am proud to be their ally. I refuse to be their enemy.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for everyone's time, and I would like to adjourn debate for tonight. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As we made some good progress and had some good debate this afternoon, I would propose that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:20 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Introduction of Visitors	1775
Introduction of Guests	1775, 1776
Members' Statements	
Affordable Child Care	1776
Soviet Communism	1776
New Red Deer College Green Energy Residence	1777
Pipeline Opposition	1777
Fiscal Policies and Prosperity	1785
Openness and Transparency in Government	1786
Oral Question Period	
Pipeline Approval and Construction	1777
Federal Equalization Payments	1778
Provincial By-election	1778
Provincial Response to Pipeline Opponents	1779
Hospital Construction in Edmonton and Calgary	1779
Health Care Costs	1780
Catholic School Sex Education Curriculum	1780
Health Care System	1781
Caribou Range Plans	1781
Energy Policies	1782
Diabetes Support in Schools	1783
Seniors' Issues	1783
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped	1784
Workers' Compensation System	1784
Downtown Edmonton Health and Social Services	1785
Notices of Motions	1786
Tabling Returns and Reports	1786
Tablings to the Clerk	1786
Statement by the Speaker	
Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements, House Leaders' Agreements	1788
Motions under Standing Order 42	
Federal Equalization Payment Negotiations	1789
Orders of the Day	1789
Government Bills and Orders	
Third Reading	
Bill 21 Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017	1789
Bill 22 Resident and Family Councils Act	1790
Second Reading	
Bill 25 Regulated Forestry Profession Amendment Act, 2017	1794
Bill 23 Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017	1796
Bill 24 An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances	1796

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