



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 27, 2017

Day 56

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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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)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
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Party standings:

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

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Kleinstauber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 27, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.
Great game, sad score.

Please join me in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. Sing in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, if we might reflect and pray. As we gather today, let us not forget that this Assembly, Alberta's Assembly, is an institution created to represent every person who calls this province their home. We are all here. We are all Albertans. In our deliberations today we must be mindful of how each person's identity is shaped by many different things. Thus, we must keep in mind how each would be affected by the decisions that we will make.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Albertans are incredibly concerned about crime, so much so that over 100 of them are in our gallery today to show their concern to this government. Included in that group are Alison Marshall, who has done a lot of groundwork in preparation for today; Red Deer county's Mayor Jim Wood and councillors Richard Lorenz, Dana Depalme, and Christine Moore; Raven Crime Watch executive members Richard Foesier, Fred Grono, Richard Gundersen, and Margaret Lowe; and my beautiful wife, Maggie MacIntyre. I'd ask them to stand now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce some of the finest, brightest, wildly intelligent, competent, capable, incredible, fantastic students from Prairie Christian academy. They're joined today by a good friend of mine, their teacher Michael Robertson, and Bill Redifer. If they would all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you 30 students, who are seated in the galleries today, from St. John XXIII Catholic elementary school, a school in my constituency, the most beautiful constituency,

I think, and probably some of the smartest students in the entire province. I had the pleasure of opening that school with the Minister of Education. They are accompanied here today by their teachers Mme Jennifer Steedsman and Mme Ashley Stevens along with their chaperones Mrs. Debra Somani, Mrs. Nicia Gerhard, and Ms Jodie de Moissac. If they'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups here today?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. With your indulgence, I do have three sets of introductions. First, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Dennis Malayko and his family – Merrillou Malayko, Mark Malayko, Erin Angelstad, and Mya Angelstad – who are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. In 1974 the Alberta government established the Gale commission to provide advice and recommendations on how to prevent workplace injuries and deaths. As the first occupational health and safety officer in Alberta Dennis worked on that commission's recommendations, advice that would form our province's first health and safety system. He advocated strongly to the Lougheed government for improvements and to Lougheed himself directly in meetings, and while much of this work was done, his advice to form mandatory joint work-site health and safety committees was not taken. Today is a testament to the old adage that you should never let them tell you that it can't be done, even if it takes over 40 years. He is now retired, but his hard work on health and safety will benefit all Albertans for decades to come. I'd like to ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Shirley Hickman and Donna Van Bruggen from Threads of Life. Workplace tragedies don't just affect the workers involved; they have a profound impact on families. After losing her son in a workplace tragedy in Ontario in 1996, Shirley cofounded Threads of Life, a national registered charity dedicated to helping families affected by workplace tragedy. Many families have been helped by Threads of Life, families like Donna's. Donna, too, lost her son in a workplace tragedy, in 2012. Now Donna is a volunteer speaker for Threads of Life. They work every day to lead and inspire a future where all workplaces are safe and workplace injuries, illnesses, and deaths are unacceptable. I would now like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Gray: For my final introduction, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Alyssa Smith from the Workers' Resource Centre in Calgary. The Workers' Resource Centre is a charitable organization funded through the United Way of Calgary and Area, the Alberta Law Foundation, and donations from individuals and organizations across Alberta. They assist and support Albertans by helping them to complete applicable forms, writing letters, initiating claims and complaints and appeals when workers are injured. She helps in representing them at appeals and hearings and referrals to appropriate agencies. I'm very pleased

to have her here with us today. I'd like to ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a group of advocates from the Alberta chapter of the Canadian Hemophilia Society. November 26 marked the 20th anniversary of the Krever inquiry, which investigated contamination of the blood supply with HIV and hepatitis C. Thousands of Canadians with hemophilia and other blood disorders were impacted through the use of tainted blood products. We continue to honour the memory of those who were impacted. The tainted blood tragedy remains one of Canada's worst ever public health disasters, and it stands as a reminder of why patient safety must be at the heart of our public health care system. I ask the following guests – Carmen Nishiyama, Cleaven Pagani, and Joanna Halliday – who are seated in the Speaker's gallery, to please rise and receive our welcome and our gratitude.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a friend, mentor, and my former boss, Yvonne Fast. Yvonne worked in health care for many years before becoming involved in the labour movement. She held many positions, including president of CUPE Alberta, the national staff representative for CUPE national, and, recently, provincial director. I came to know Yvonne when I worked with CUPE negotiating for workers in nonprofits and women's shelters all across our province. Yvonne was a caring boss and always challenged me to sharpen and refine many of the skills that have helped me in my role in this House. After a career spanning over 30 years fighting for the rights of workers in our province, Yvonne is retiring as the regional director of CUPE Alberta, and she will be missed. Yvonne is joined here today by her husband, Mitchell Fast. I wish them both well in this new chapter in their lives. I hope that they spend time, of course, during their retirement travelling around this province and spending some tourism dollars. I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a visiting delegation from Lakeland county crime watch. They are part of a group of over 100 Albertans here today upset and concerned with the rise of crime in rural Alberta. I would ask that they please stand as I call their names: Gabrielle Bayduza, Myra Bochon, Trevor Dunham, Levina Ewasiuk, Lillian Ewasiuk, Dennis Heffernan, Erna Holliday, Deborah Lawrence, Wray McCoy, Jonny Nielsen, Carolyn Onusko, Louise Poirier-McCoy, Orest Sereda, Lyn Young, Dolores Zacharuk, and Lawrence Zarowny. Please join me in extending my guests the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, you have a second group. Is that right?

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and introduce some wonderful constituents from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. They've travelled here to watch the proceedings today. Well, they have some significant concerns about rural crime and the continual victimization that's going on in rural Alberta with the amount of crime that is taking place. There are seven folks from the constituency here today. If they will rise as I call their names: Glenn Bishell, Connie Huelsman, Bryan Kasha, Richard Ross, Dave Stauber, and Lorraine Richards, who, I might add, has been broken into seven – seven – times. These guests are seated in both galleries. I hope that they will be here and that the minister will accept our request for an emergency debate on this very important issue of rural crime.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you a number of folks from the central Alberta area who are here because they are very concerned about rural crime and violence that they are experiencing. From 2012 to 2015 Lacombe county experienced an increase in total crime offenses of 141 per cent, reported by the RCMP, and a property crime increase of almost 200 per cent. I would ask that as I call out your name, you would please stand: from Lacombe county a member of the Burnt Lake crime watch, Harvey Buit; Lacombe county councillor Dana Kreil and Edward Kreil; the Benalto crime watch president, Jim Morton; a citizen from Lacombe county, Joan Smith; the mayor of Alix, Robert Fehr, who has also been a past crime watch president and is still actively involved in crime watch; Lacombe county's deputy reeve, Ken Wigmore, also a member of the Lacombe rural crime watch, that he serves on; from the city of Lacombe a citizen, Garth Campbell; the mayor of Amisk, Bill Rock; and, lastly, from Battle River-Wainwright crime force organizer Blake Moser. If you would please all receive the warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other guests, hon. members? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a group of concerned Albertans. Rural Albertans are tired of living in fear. They're tired of having police on speed-dial, they're tired of being robbed, and they're tired of being forgotten. Included in the over 100 people here today looking for answers are Mr. David Hamilton, Kayli Henrikson, Mary-Ann Henrikson, Clarence Jobs, Inez Jobs, Lorie Johanson, Edith Kaiser, Arnold Kaiser, and Carol Lawson. I'd like to invite them to please stand and to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you today a group from the over 100 people that are here today to bring communication on the concerns that they're seeing of crime in rural Alberta. These people that I'm introducing to you are from Red Deer county, one of the beautiful counties that I have the privilege of representing in this place. Sadly, it ranks as number 5 in *Maclean's* magazine's most dangerous places to live in Canada, and the people that I'm about to introduce to you know why. I would like to ask them to stand as I say their names.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you're not introducing all 100?

Mr. Nixon: No, Mr. Speaker. I'm not introducing all 100, but I suspect all 100 will be introduced before we're done. I have Kent Anderson, Lynn Hambly, Pamela Davidson, Jim Loughheed, Terry MacKenzie, James Martin, Sandra Martin, Elgar Newsham, Linda Nielen, Doris Norman, and Gerald Oxtoby. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it is an honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you again a group of individuals who are very frustrated Albertans. Their friendly communities have turned into communities of suspicion, and instead of relaxing at home, they are on edge and here with us today. Included in the group from Red Deer county are Fred Andersen, Bernice Andersen, Tammy Cocke, Robert Bilowus, Jeremy Crossman, John Marshall, Allan Erickson, Garth Fitch, Wendy Wilson, Kenneth Rogoza, and Mabel Hamilton. If they could please rise, we can extend to them the warm welcome of this Assembly. Thank you for being here.

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

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Albertans are being victimized and revictimized by criminals. They are openly frustrated and scared, and many of them have come here today because of that. I'd like to introduce to you and through you – and I'd invite them to stand as I mention their names – Vincent Lohman, Cameron Lohman, Lisa Newton, Jack Oszli, Catherine Perry, Edward and Alfred Schatschneider, and Judith Winn. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly concerned citizens from a group of over a hundred who have joined us here today. I can assure you that we would have more, but there are not enough seats. Living in fear is no way to live. Being afraid to stay in your home and afraid to live is an impossible situation. I'd like to invite Kellyann Rude, Brian Rude, Sandra Smith, Margo Staniforth, Edward Whitehead, Kenneth Whitehead, Roderick Strong, Dwayne Tyrkalo, Gary Wagers, and Glen Wordie to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent of the Assembly to continue with the introductions, to postpone question period, until they are finished and to extend the time for the Routine until it's completed.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Are there any other introductions here today, hon. members? The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was going to do this introduction later, but I believe that my guests are in the gallery. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some of the amazing occupational health and safety and legal team that has worked hard on the legislation being

introduced today, Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans. We have with us Diane Radnoff, Elizabeth Chung, Melinda Yiu, Amanda Stephenson, Ray Cislo, Ann Laing, Teresa McKinnon, Mark Rice, Chelsea Evans-Rymes, Jill Willis, Candice Kinal, and Mark Greene.

Mr. Speaker, lots of hard work goes into proposing positive change, and we couldn't be here without the knowledge and expertise of our civil servants in Alberta Labour. They work hard every day to ensure that Albertans have safe and healthy workplaces, and they have my utmost gratitude for the work that they do. I'd like them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we've been urging this government to step up and start defending our energy sector, and good on them for at least trying to do so this last week. They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so I guess the Hon. Jason Kenney should be quite flattered to see the Premier borrow some of his language. But talk is cheap. To the Premier: if her Trudeau Liberal allies refuse to actually advocate in B.C., will she rescind her support for Justin Trudeau's 67 per cent hike on the carbon tax? The job-killing carbon tax, I might add.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for giving me an opportunity to talk about our government's continued and ongoing support of our energy industry and about the work that we've been doing over the last week and a half and that will be going on next week, which, of course, is a continuation of the work that we began months after we got elected. It's very, very important for us to deliver the message to all Canadians that our energy industry supports all Canadians and that our energy industry provides stability and good jobs for working families across this country. And, quite interestingly, another message that I will . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: If you think that a 75 per cent tax on natural gas is bad now, just wait until Ottawa's carbon tax hike comes into place, with Justin Trudeau demanding a 67 per cent increase to the NDP's own job-killing carbon tax and the Premier conceding to that without a fight and without one inch of pipeline actually being built. In fact, Ottawa has killed two pipelines since then. I previously tried to pass a motion demanding that Ottawa rein in the National Energy Board's decision to include upstream and downstream emissions in a pipeline assessment. Unfortunately, the NDP government blocked my efforts. But since the government is again following our lead, will the Premier now . . .

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

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Anyway, carrying on with what I was saying before, our government was very proud to work with and stand with our energy industry from the point when we got elected and moving forward. One way we

started doing that was by working with those progressive leaders in the energy industry who understood that we needed to position ourselves as the most sustainable and responsible energy producer in the world, which they have successfully done, and they have my great support. But what they need is for the members opposite to stop calling them down, stop political grandstanding, and start pulling together with the rest of the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this Premier is the one who called Albertans embarrassing cousins. I'm glad to see that she doesn't think that anymore. But let's talk about this. The last time the Premier visited with her friend John Horgan, who is now the B.C. Premier, the B.C. NDP Premier, he said that she had no intention of persuading him when it came to pipelines. It's a simple question. The Premier will visit Vancouver later this week. Will she meet with her old comrade John Horgan, the NDP Premier of B.C., and will she actually defend and stand up for pipelines with him? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I know that you're all glad to be back in this happy, joyous place and you're looking forward to exchanges with each other. Let's make sure that we are quiet, and we can enjoy this time together.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to begin, when it comes to past references to awkward relatives, let me be entirely clear. That reference was with respect to the Conservative Party and their predecessors over there and their record, the record that they have in not succeeding in terms of getting pipelines built. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Notley: The message that I've been delivering this week to the federal NDP is: a climate plan that doesn't understand and support working people is bound to fail. The message to the federal Liberal government is: stand up and get the job done. And the message to the Conservatives is: stop playing politics about something that's so important to all Canadians.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Keystone XL Pipeline Project

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are sincerely pleased to see Keystone XL approved in Nebraska last week. On this side of the House we support pipelines for Alberta oil in every direction. Unfortunately, the NDP can't say the same. When in opposition the Premier said that they were against it when asked about Keystone XL. When in government the NDP abandoned the fight for Keystone. When Hillary Clinton came out against the pipeline, the Premier agreed. Now we hope that the NDP has had a genuine about-face when it comes to Keystone. Will the Premier admit that her party's previous opposition to Keystone was wrong headed?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated last week, our government was pleased to see the progress that was made with respect to Keystone because we understand that it is important for our energy industry. It's important for ensuring that we reduce costs and ultimately increase returns for Albertans and

for Canadians. Of course, the allegations about things that our government did were in fact something that's two sword lengths, one nose length in between here and there. I will say that we've been standing up for the Alberta energy industry, and the members opposite need to start acknowledging it. [interjections]

The Speaker: Calm it down, folks. Calm it down.

Mr. Nixon: The hon. Rob Merrifield, Alberta's former envoy to Washington, DC, revealed last week that the first order he received from this incoming NDP government was to stop advocating for Keystone. I'll remind you that at that time Keystone had not been rejected by the White House. In fact, there was a major effort to get congressional approval, and the NDP scuttled that effort. The government has denied Merrifield's claims. To the Premier: if you have nothing to hide, will you table your communications between your office and Alberta's mission to Washington in 2015?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, the assertions made by Mr. Kenney and his political friends are absolutely, deeply, profoundly untrue. The reputation that the members opposite are starting to develop with respect to their relationship with facts is something that all Albertans are beginning to worry about. You know what? You've just got to stop making stuff up. That's what the member opposite is referring to, something that was made up, and that's all I have to say on the matter.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I gave the Premier an opportunity to provide facts. She did not. Instead she insulted the hon. Rob Merrifield, insulted the Hon. Jason Kenney. Instead of standing up in this House and proving that what she says is true, she continues to use decoys and to go out of her way to insult people. The question is: table the documents and prove that what you're saying is true, or it's not. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. There's snow in Toronto, but it's very nice outside today here, so you want to make sure that you get out there and enjoy that fresh air.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I can't table documents that don't exist. But had I ever given direction to Mr. Merrifield, what I would likely have said was something along the lines of, "Stop using your diplomatic position to promote the political aspirations of your former party," much like he's doing right now.

Interestingly, though, what I can say is that I am very proud that this government appointed a professional diplomat who has been working on behalf of the people of Alberta and supporting our energy industry in Washington ever since. We've gotten success, there will be more, and I'm very proud of that.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Rural Crime

Mr. Nixon: Rural Albertans across this province are expressing their concerns about the dramatic increase in crime in their communities. They're being victimized, they're being abused, and the Justice minister for this government says that everything is okay and the system is working okay. The people in the gallery and the people back home in my constituency and across rural Alberta disagree, so today I will move an emergency motion before this House. I ask through you, Mr. Speaker: will the Premier and her

caucus support that emergency debate motion so that we can stand up for the people that are victimized by criminals in this province?
2:00

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite ought to know that the proposal that they're putting forward is undoubtedly outside of the rules of the House although we'll see what happens when the matter is discussed.

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

Ms Notley: That being said, it doesn't take away at all from the importance of this issue to all Albertans and especially to rural Albertans. We know that they want to feel safe in their communities, and we know that crime is going up in certain communities across the province. That's why our government is continuing to invest in policing. That's why our government is supporting the rural integrated crime unit. That's why our government is continuing to support all the funding that prevents crime.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see that the Premier thinks that she's you and she can decide what's in order in this House, but that is ridiculous.

Here are the facts. The people that she's talking about are in this gallery today. The people that she's talking about are being robbed, are being abused, are being victimized, and are scared to be in their own homes. I am tired of going home on constituency breaks or on the weekend and hearing the abuse that the people that I represent are going through. Again, I will ask through you, Mr. Speaker: will the Premier stand up, vote with us, declare an emergency debate? Let's get down to work for the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you and most other members of this House know, that's not exactly the way the process works. That being said, I'm very pleased that our acting Minister of Justice will be having the opportunity today to meet with a number of the people who are here today, and we are also very pleased that over the course of the last week and a half we've been able to have even more meetings through AAMDC and AUMA. We have in fact heard the head of AAMDC, who said that he trusts that this government is working as hard as it can to address the issue that we know is a very serious problem for rural Albertans. But one thing that I will definitely say . . .

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, if you're not in support of this motion, you may as well be with the criminals that are victimizing my constituents. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. People are being robbed in our communities. People are being victimized in our communities.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

Mr. Nixon: They're here . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I just want to caution the use of words by implication with respect to criminals in the House. I did not hear the preamble as clearly as I wanted because it was too noisy. However, I hope that wasn't the case. Please, continue with your question.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, is this government going to stand up for Albertans or hide behind the ridiculous procedural arguments that

this Premier is trying to bring forward? We will bring forward a motion where we can stand up for Albertans in this House today. Is the Premier with Albertans, or is she against them? It's that simple.

The Speaker: Government House Leader, did you make a point of order?

Mr. Mason: I did.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What the people of Alberta need is a reasoned debate, reasoned government actions to deal with this crisis. What they do not need is grandstanding and name-calling of the sort that we just saw. That won't help anything. I'm pleased that the minister will be meeting with these folks. We are very pleased that we are continuing to fund these important, important programs. You know what won't help this problem? Cutting it by 20 per cent. How in heaven's name does the member opposite expect to make progress with the kinds of cuts that they keep demanding?

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

Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Study after study after study has shown that the Springbank off-stream reservoir is the cheapest, most effective, and most timely way to ensure that the downtown Calgary and river communities are protected from flooding like we saw in 2013. My constituents and everyone who cares about the economic engine of downtown Calgary were very concerned when the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency sent back a long list of questions about the Springbank environmental impact assessment. To the Minister of Transportation: given that your department has put a lot of resources into preparing that EIA, why are there still so many outstanding questions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. He's been a solid advocate on behalf of the Springbank reservoir, which is something that is strongly supported and continues to be strongly supported by this government because it is the right answer to protect Calgary from future major flood events. We have not wavered. We are not wavering now. Now, having said that, there are a number of deficiencies in the EIA, as has been pointed out, but these kinds of requests for further information are normal and part of the normal process. We're working very hard to supply the additional information.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This spring will represent five years since the devastating southern Alberta floods, and every year that goes by brings more risk, so it's incredibly frustrating to see that there may be yet another delay on this project. The timeline has already been extended, and I'm worried this latest setback will put the people and businesses in southern Alberta at risk for even longer. Again to the Minister of Transportation: what impact will this information request have on the project timeline, and what are you doing to ensure that your department will work quickly to answer the CEAA's questions and keep the project on track?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the hon. member and the House that the department and I are working full out to make sure that these deficiencies are remedied as quickly as possible and as thoroughly as possible. We think that any delays will be measured in weeks and not months.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week it was revealed that the few remaining landowners opposed to this project are coming up with new and creative ways to try to block it. Most recently they've proposed a development in what appears to be an attempt to frustrate the province's legitimate plans to acquire the land. Again to the minister: will this tactic have an impact on the project costs or timeline, and can you reassure the countless thousands of people who would benefit from this project – including my constituents, everyone who lives or works in downtown Calgary, the people downstream of the city, including those in Siksika, Medicine Hat, and rural Alberta – that you remain committed to the Springbank off-stream reservoir?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure unequivocally that we remain committed to the Springbank off-stream reservoir as a solution to the protection of Calgary from future flood events. I want to assure him that we are doing everything possible. This particular proposed development will not change the value of the land, and we don't consider it a serious proposition. It's an attempt to drive up the cost of the land, and we're making sure that we do everything possible to make sure that does not happen.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Bow.

Sexual Violence Survivors

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that sexual violence predominantly is a gendered crime. The vast majority of survivors are women, and our government is making good progress on this, but there's still more work to be done. We have all seen the flood of disclosures of gender-based violence on social media with the Me Too hash tag. To the Minister of Status of Women: how can we support survivors of sexual violence who have disclosed abuse that's happened to them?

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have certainly been humbled by the outpouring of disclosures of sexual violence. All Albertans deserve to be free from the threat of violence. We know that the root cause of gendered violence is gender inequality, and that's why our government has taken a number of steps to address violence against women in this province and to shift the culture, including investing over \$800,000 over three years to fund the I Believe You campaign, because it's important that survivors know that if they come forward, they will be treated with respect and dignity. By tackling women's equality, we tackle violence against women. That's why for the first time in Alberta's history we established a ministry dedicated to advancing women's equality.

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

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had many survivors of sexual abuse come into my constituency office to share their stories

and seek help. One constituent in particular was sexually abused at a very young age and was put into various foster care arrangements, where the abuse continued for many years. To the same minister: what is our government doing to protect and support sexual abuse survivors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in this country, we, unlike our friends opposite, understand how critical it is to invest in women's safety. We boosted funding for women's shelters by \$15 million to help ensure that women and their children fleeing from violence are not turned away. We increased access to the legal system for survivors of domestic violence by removing the time limit to bring forward civil claims. We made it easier for survivors of domestic violence to get out of dangerous situations by allowing them to break residential leases without financial penalty. Even with these important steps we on this side of the House know that there is much more work to do. We will continue to work with our valued community and . . .

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

2:10

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that survivors are feeling empowered to come forward and get help. To the same minister: what is our government doing specifically with initiatives to help empower survivors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Survivors of sexual violence deserve to be believed, feel safe, and be supported. Our government is taking action to make life better for women and girls in Alberta. We've invested more than half a billion dollars in front-line policing and established guidelines for police to help ensure a consistent response to domestic violence incidents. We've increased funding by \$25 million to help family and community support services address issues like sexual violence and to promote healthy relationships, and we've promoted sexual assault prevention programs with stable funding. We've invested more than \$21.7 million in family and community safety grants to support programs which focus on preventing domestic and sexual violence, all things that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Rural Crime (continued)

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler the community of Donalda has started to put together a rural crime watch to help deal with the ever-increasing problem of rural crime. They understand that the RCMP have vast areas to patrol. They have concerns that even when it's common knowledge about who the problem citizens are, police resources are so sparse that they can't properly investigate. To the minister: what are you doing to support these small communities beyond telling them to request additional officers? If that actually worked, why would rural crime be so rampant?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to answer all of these questions on behalf of the Minister of Justice today. I want to first of all reassure the members of Donald and everybody in the galleries today that our government takes the issue of rural crime very seriously. We believe that every Albertan deserves to live in a community that's safe, and our government has invested significant resources in policing all across this province.

An Hon. Member: How much?

Mr. Schmidt: Five hundred million dollars a year to be exact, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to look forward to the opportunity to meet with some members of the gallery after question period to discuss some additional steps that our government can take to reduce rural crime.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that known criminals with lengthy criminal records are committing crimes such as petty theft in these areas and given that when these criminals are finally brought to justice, they are given a slap on the wrist by the courts, Minister, Albertans want to know what your government is doing to promote minimum sentencing in order to ensure that these habitual offenders are taken off the street and out of our communities.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's my understanding that the issue of minimum sentencing is a federal jurisdiction issue and not necessarily one that the province would deal with. With respect to getting notorious criminals off the street, the integrated crime reduction unit in central Alberta has already been successful at taking three extremely well-known individuals off the streets. These people have been responsible for over 300 calls over the last few months. Our government continues to support the RCMP in their work to reduce crime in central Alberta and in rural areas all across the province.

Mr. Strankman: Given that these Albertans are fed up with what seems to be a common practice of the Crown to drop cases over an overtaxed court system and given that the recent ruling on the Jordan case has compounded this troubling issue and given that justice delayed is justice denied, Minister, your government claims to be doing everything it can to alleviate these issues. Will you table the performance measures that you're using to track how effective your policies are at combatting this troubling situation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we continue to push the federal government to fill the additional judicial spaces that we created, and I'd be pleased to table a copy of the letter that the Minister of Justice sent to her federal counterpart after question period today. We've also hired 50 additional Crown prosecutors. We've hired additional court staff. We're confident that those measures will accelerate the processes through the courts and make sure that these cases are dealt with as quickly as possible.

Crime and Public Safety in Airdrie and Area

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, Airdrie has a vibrant business community that has grown significantly over the past decade. We've also had the CrossIron Mills mall open nearly eight years ago, and another

new megamall is set to open up right beside it. The business community is getting increasingly concerned about the rising incidence of crime in the area, particularly theft, property damage, and criminal mischief. The Balzac Business Community Association and local RCMP have identified and communicated a need for increased manpower to handle the larger population. The Airdrie and area RCMP remains at eight members, same as it was eight years ago. What is this NDP government doing about this very major problem?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government is committed to making sure that the businesses in Balzac as well as the residents of every community feel safe in their homes. Our government is working diligently to do that. We continue to provide over half a billion dollars in funding to police services all across the province to make sure that we have adequate resources on the streets. In addition, our government has taken meaningful steps to reduce the red tape that police officers have to deal with so that they can spend more time on the streets and less time pushing pencils behind desks.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this situation isn't improving, and this government isn't helping. With the business park near CrossIron Mills mall experiencing a 24 per cent increase in property crimes in one year and given that multiple businesses have actually been broken into multiple times and given that owners have taken to sleeping in their shops overnight out of fear for their property and livelihoods and given that this shouldn't happen in a democratic, orderly society, again, what is this government doing to address my constituents fears and concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Minister of Justice's office has already heard from the people of Balzac that the hon. member referred to, and we've provided them some additional information, some steps that they can do to enhance crime prevention in their communities. Of course, our government continues to provide adequate financial resources for police officers all across the province, financial resources, I would remind you, that those members voted against.

Mrs. Pitt: Oh, Mr. Speaker, I sure hope that those criminals get that memo.

Given that the province of Alberta is responsible for ensuring that an adequate and effective level of policing is maintained throughout the province and given that crime is on the rise everywhere – we're seeing it in rural areas, and we're seeing it in urban areas – and given that this is not just about material possessions but that people are fearing for their personal safety, their physical safety, and given that we live in a first-world country, what is this NDP government doing to keep people safe?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, I've heard from many rural Albertans from all across the province about their concerns about crime, and our government is committed to making sure that our communities remain safe places to live. What we are doing is providing stable funding for police services all across the province during the worst economic downturn in a generation, financial resources that those members continue to vote against and are in fact proposing to cut.

Rural Crime

(continued)

Mr. MacIntyre: Mr. Speaker, rural Alberta is under siege. Rural residents are in constant fear of coming home to find that they have been robbed. But they are not only concerned with the loss of property; rural Albertans are also concerned about themselves and their loved ones being physically harmed at the hands of these criminals. Rural Albertans do not feel safe. I know one friend personally who was attacked in his home by five assailants, and he was beaten with a baseball bat. What is this government going to do to ensure that rural Albertans receive the same level of protection as those in cities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've very concerned to hear these stories of crime happening all across the province. Our government is committed to making sure that every Albertan feels safe in their home, and that's why we continue to provide resources for police services all across the province. Additionally, the new deputy commissioner of the RCMP in Alberta has undertaken a number of initiatives to tackle rural crime, which include a crime reduction strategy, renewed focus on the intelligence program, continued focus on traffic services as well as the development of the call management strategy so that police resources are used as efficiently as possible so that we can tackle these issues of rural crime.

Mr. MacIntyre: Rural Albertans, frankly, are fed up with the exorbitant wait times for police to arrive on the scene. Given that just last year the Red Deer area topped Stats Canada's crime severity index, if the government will not protect rural Albertans, who will? Does it fall to rural Albertans to protect themselves? Is this government prepared for the implications of that? Nobody wants to see people physically hurt or even killed. What is this government's plan to address this severe injustice?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you who they can't trust, and that's Jason Kenney because he wants to cut the police budget by 20 per cent, which would take half of all of our police officers off the road. In fact, he has a track record of making these cuts as a government member in cabinet in Ottawa. He cut funding to ALERT and will continue to turn his back on Albertans. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members. [interjections] Hon. members.

Mr. MacIntyre: This NDP government has done nothing but fail Albertans on the Justice file. Given that triage protocol from this NDP government has meant violent criminals have gone unprosecuted, further endangering victims, and given the known high incidence of recidivism and corresponding danger that rural Albertans now face as a consequence of this gross inaction, will this NDP government finally listen to Albertans that enough is enough and get tough on crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government is in fact investing resources in dealing with criminal processes. We've invested in hiring 50 more Crown prosecutors, we've increased court staff, and we're building a new courthouse

in Red Deer so that we can deal with these cases in a timely manner. Our record shows that we are, in fact, tough on crime. A 20 per cent cut in the budget would be tough on police and would leave these people in the galleries to continue to be victimized by the criminals roaming rural Alberta.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that rural crime is rampant in areas of Alberta, and quite frankly citizens are sick of it. I've reached out, and I have some questions from victims. It used to be rare, you know, to know someone that had something stolen out on the farm. Now it's rare if you know someone that hasn't. Minister, does the NDP even know or care what's happening outside the large cities, and what are they doing about it besides asking the AUMA to write their local MP for more RCMP resources?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, I have many friends and family who live in rural Alberta communities all across the province, and I've heard from them how scared they are in their homes and how fearful they are that they could be potential victims of crime. That's why our government has continued to invest in police resources. I'm not sure, if the members are concerned about theft, why they're endorsing Jason Kenney to steal money from the budgets from police so that they will no longer be able to do their jobs.

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

I want to caution everyone with respect – we've heard on at least two occasions from each side of the House references to personal character, words like “criminals,” “theft,” and “stealing.” I want to remind you all that . . . [interjection] Hon. member.

The first supplemental.

Mr. Schneider: Given that these rural victims feel alone after crimes perpetuated against them and given that the police don't come sometimes for a day to investigate, if they come at all, and given that law enforcement don't let victims know and the public know if they actually catch anyone or try to, Minister, does this government intend to direct law enforcement to keep the victims of crime informed during the investigation process instead of increasing their sense of isolation and uncertainty by not informing them whether the perpetrator is still at large?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. All I can say on this issue is that we continue to provide the supports to police through providing half a billion dollars in funding to make sure that the police are on the streets fighting crime. In addition, like I said before in an answer to a previous question, we've reduced the red tape the police have to deal with so that they can spend more of their time fighting crime and not dealing with busywork behind their desks.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, given that a constituent had his truck stolen and tools and equipment within the back of it in one week and then the criminals came back to try to steal his son's truck the following week and given that insurance rates rise rapidly once claims are made and given the lack of communication by law enforcement which would keep victims in the loop and given that self-defence makes criminals out of law-abiding citizens, Minister, he wants to know: when will this government stand up for the victims and ensure that these criminals are prosecuted to the full extent of the law, not given a slap on the wrist?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I would remind the member that the federal Conservative government was in power for 10 years and they did nothing to increase the number of judge positions here in Alberta. They also, with Jason Kenney as a member of that cabinet, cut funding to ALERT. They continue to turn their back on Albertans and created this. We stepped up with funding. We replaced the federal funding that was taken away by Jason Kenney. Our government is supporting rural Albertans. We're tackling crime. Those guys, when they had the opportunity, actually made it worse.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. You have a point of order?
The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Rural Police Service and Crime Prevention

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Alberta policing is in a crisis. The RCMP are the lowest paid force in the province. They cannot get enough recruits. Member morale is at an all-time low. I know ex-RCMP members who quit the force. Ottawa doesn't care, and we are not getting value for the contract money we pay. Will this government tell us how much money we spend on the RCMP's policing contract and how much of that actually goes to real Alberta community policing versus federal national security and non-Alberta administrative expenses?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member is that we provide over \$500 million to support policing all across the province. If the member opposite is concerned about what the federal government was doing with funding police in this province, he should probably ask his friend Jason Kenney what he did on the issue because what we know is that he actually made the issue worse by cutting ALERT funding, funding that we had to step up and fill in because the federal Conservative government wasn't willing to, money that we could have used to further prevent rural crime and reduce rural crime, but we were given no choice because Jason Kenney turned his back on Albertans when he was in Ottawa.

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, one woman writes: "Our new business in a fenced, locked compound has been broken into four times in four months. I can't sleep at night worrying, waiting for the next hit. Another victimless crime? I don't think so," she says. Given that she went to a Citizens on Patrol meeting in Rimbey and 230 crime-affected, fearful, and frustrated community members filled that room, does this government intend to leave citizens to enact their own patrols? If so, how will you assist them, or will you just abandon them to fend for themselves?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very sorry to hear about this case. Of course, I've heard concerns about crime from members of rural Alberta from all across the province, and our government values safe and caring communities. That's why our government is stepping up to continue to fund police officers across the province.

In answer to his previous question, the RCMP contract salaries went up this past year, and we pay 70 per cent of the RCMP costs. I will endeavour to get further information for the member if he should so request.

Mr. Orr: I would appreciate that information. Thank you. Helpful.

Given that the justice system protects the rights of violent criminal repeat offenders, sends them laughing through revolving doors so they can continue to revictimize with their violence, and given that the rights, the safety, the civil security, the peaceful possession of law-abiding, unarmed, defenseless citizens are continually threatened, families are terrorized by gun-toting invaders while children literally hide under their beds – these are real and repeating events – when is this government going to fix a broken system that in real consequences actually tramples all remnants of safety and justice to rural, law-abiding citizens?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you. Like the member opposite, I, too, have heard these kinds of stories of people being victimized in their own homes in rural Alberta. Our government doesn't find that situation acceptable. That's why we've taken steps to make the court system work more efficiently by hiring more Crown prosecutors, more court staff. We're also building the new Red Deer courthouse so that we can deal with these in a timely manner so that the criminals are off the streets and that people feel safe in their communities.

2:30 Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment

Cortes-Vargas: Mr. Speaker, I could tell you many heart-wrenching stories about many individuals who face a complex path when trying to break the cycle of abuse. It is one of the many reasons I came into politics. The opioid crisis is affecting every community in our province, and rural communities face the additional barrier of limited access to services. To the Associate Minister of Health: how are you working to support Albertans' substance use issues in rural Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The number of Albertans that we have lost to this issue is so high, which should remind us all that the opioid crisis is serious and requires a government that is taking action. We have brought in thousands of new treatment spaces in every part of the province, including clinics in Cardston, Ponoka, Strathcona county, and expanded telehealth into the central zone and also to remote areas. As a result, the number of Albertans getting help has more than quadrupled this year. That's thousands and thousands of people out of harm's way, and that's good news.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. PCNs like the one in Sherwood Park play an important role in addressing this issue. To the minister: how are you working to ensure primary care networks have the expertise and resources to provide substance use treatment to patients?

The Speaker: The associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our response to the opioid overdose crisis is guided by a diverse and committed group of Albertans. One of the commission's recommendations is to provide funding to bring substance use treatment into doctors' offices at primary care networks. We know that primary care physicians are on the front lines and are often in a position to provide early interventions and care. That's why I've accepted this recommendation, and we will be working with our physician partners to implement it.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last week the Canadian Institute for Health Information noted that Alberta dispenses opioid medications to patients at a higher rate than other provinces and given that this story of how addiction to opioids starts is all too common, what are you doing to help the medical profession evaluate their opioid prescribing practices?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We supported the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta when they changed their standards of practice for opioid prescribing in March. Overprescribing is a serious problem, and I know that physicians understand that. They are changing their behaviour as a profession, and the early data shows that we are turning a corner on opioid overprescription.

Southern Alberta Wildfire Recovery

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the wildfire that devastated southeastern Alberta may be officially extinguished, but the devastation it caused continues to impact thousands of people. In Saskatchewan the provincial government is committed to matching private donations up to \$100,000 in support of wildfire victims. Here in Alberta our government is silent, and there is no such help. To the minister: will you commit to following Saskatchewan's lead and support Albertans devastated by wildfire by matching private donations?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Our government is committed to working with municipalities around the province to do our part to ensure that communities are protected. We know that wildfires in southern Alberta had significant impacts on the communities, and that's why we're continuing to work with them in their recovery.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that while the immediate danger from the fire has dissipated, many of the people that were impacted by the southeastern wildfires are now facing significant water quality issues and given that wildfires can cause a number of concerning changes to water quality such as increased sulphates and dissolved solids, including organic carbon, chloride, and iron, changes to pH level, and changes to the colour, taste, and odour of the water, again to the minister: what is being done to ensure that those impacted by the fire have safe drinking water for themselves and their livestock?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The member is right that, certainly, we have seen these effects on drinking water quality both in Fort McMurray and southeast Alberta and elsewhere, so that's why as a government we're committed to ensuring that we invest in water and waste-water treatment facilities.

As for the specifics of the question, I'm very pleased to follow up with the hon. member and any of the municipal officials or other ranching families or other landowners that might be affected by this.

Thanks.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you for that.

Given that in order to be eligible for DRP funding, a disaster must be extraordinary, insurance not reasonably or readily available, and that there is evidence the event is widespread and given that after talking with constituents affected by the wildfires, I understand that insurance for agricultural fencing and livestock is available but not widely purchased, to the minister: shouldn't it be considered unreasonable to expect farmers and ranchers to purchase a product that isn't widely purchased by their industry? Help these affected producers.

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did meet with some folks last week at AUMA and, actually, previously at AAMD and C on topics like these, the wildfires and insurance. I'm working and my ministry is working with Ag and Forestry. Our administration folks are working with municipal officials in their areas as well. We're always trying to help Albertans, especially in times of need like this, and trying to figure out the existing programs we have, how they work, and how, you know, we could make sure that we're looking out for all Albertans. We'll continue to do that. Like I said, I've met with many municipal officials, and I'm happy to continue to do so going forward.

Crime in Carbon and Area

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I recently received a letter from a constituent in Carbon, Alberta, about the continued challenges in crime that they are facing in that community. In the month of September the grocery store was robbed four times along with vandalism and robberies at the gas station, the east campground lockbox, the garbage dump money box, the car wash change machine. This is on top of multiple vehicles that have been stolen from local farms along with fuel, tools, and equipment. How does this government expect the people of Carbon and surrounding area to feel safe in their homes and in their businesses when crime is so rampant?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we want the people of Carbon as well as people in communities all across this province to feel safe in their homes. That's why we're continuing to invest in police resources in rural areas all across the province. In addition, of course, we continue to invest in the court system so that we can move these cases, when criminals are charged, through the courthouse so that criminals are off the streets and people will continue to feel safe.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that in late September the grocery store in Carbon was robbed twice in a 48-hour period and that at one point in time the door was ripped off its frame by a truck and dragged down the street, causing significant damage, and given that following that incident the store owner, a civilian, had to camp outside the hole in the wall of his own business to protect that business because the RCMP was unable to intervene or attend, does this government expect civilians to act as full-time law enforcement officers, or what exactly is it planning on doing to provide communities and business owners the resources they need?

The Speaker: Hon. member, thank you.
The Acting Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I'm very sorry to hear these stories. We want every Albertan to feel safe in

their homes and in their businesses, and that's why we've provided stable funding for police services across the province in the face of the worst economic downturn in the province. [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Schmidt: I will remind the members that, of course, the answer to crime isn't to cut the police budget by 20 per cent so that there are fewer cops on the roads to put people behind bars.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that Lorraine Richards is in the gallery today and given that her home has been broken into seven times, including the loss of thousands of dollars of property, she asked me to ask directly the Minister of Justice: is Alberta Justice and the Sol Gen incapable of responding effectively and responsibly to the growing wave of crime in rural Alberta? Yes or no?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, to Lorraine, I'm very sorry that she suffered so many break-ins. You know, I don't think that any Albertan should have to go through that, and that's why our government wants everybody to live in a safe and caring community. We continue to provide resources for police services across the province, and like I said, we continue to cut red tape so that police no longer have to take bail hearings or deal with tickets and can spend more time on the streets reducing crime.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

2:40 Cold Lake Air Weapons Range Agreement

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. ID 349, more commonly known as the Cold Lake air weapons range, had its municipal revenues agreement lapse at the end of 2016. Many of my constituents in Bonnyville-Cold Lake are concerned that this agreement is 11 months overdue and that the Municipal Affairs department is deciding between transferring the funds to Alberta's general revenues or keeping the funds in my constituency. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: can you confirm that this agreement is done and that the property tax revenues for ID 349 are staying in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake region, that I have advocated for for a long time?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. It is critically important that the revenue-sharing agreement for ID 349 go forward. It did expire, as the member said. We've been working on it in conjunction with the municipalities in the area. We asked for feedback on that. I will say that the money will stay in that region because that's what it's meant for.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last week the mayor of Cold Lake stated that he was blindsided and treated with disrespect by this NDP government due to a lack of consultation on the new ID 349 agreement and given that the unilateral decision made by this minister has the city scrambling to make sustainable budgets, reprofile capital projects, and potentially places the development and buildup of the only city in my constituency on hold, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how did you determine the new redistribution of the funding agreement for ID 349?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, everything I try to do in my

role is to try to be fair and equitable. What we did was that we got feedback from the municipalities in the region. I've met with the mayor of Cold Lake multiple times since I've been appointed, which was last January, as well as with other folks in the region. We asked for input from them. We got that input; we looked it over. We asked for different people to give us even more input from the public. We brought forward this proposal to them last week. Frankly, sir, we've been in contact quite frequently, so "blindsided" is an interesting term to use for consultation with them.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the La Corey north resource road, better known as highway 41X, is 50.3 kilometres long and is handling approximately 3,000 vehicles per day, well above the threshold for paving, and given that many residents in Cold Lake drive the road to and from work in ID 349 but that the MD of Bonnyville is responsible for the road and received no revenue to pave this road until just now, can the minister outline the details of the new ID 349 agreement that apply to this road, and should it have been made a provincial highway?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's a good question. Actually, what the MD of Bonnyville had advocated for were the funds to make sure that they could take care of the road. They were okay with it. What we did do, through the new proposal, is that we've allocated them \$2.2 million, which is more than enough for them to make sure that that road is adequately paved and redone. We know that there are a lot of vehicles that go across there, and we want to make sure that those folks have a good, safe road to drive on in all conditions.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce some guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to, please, call upon a few people that are coming in from rural Alberta. They have been targeted by criminals, attacked, had their property stolen. When I mention your name, if you could please stand: Bruce Calder, Robert Erickson, Candice Gardiner, Walter Haupt, Michelle Hayden, Lori Taylor, Lawrence Howell, Ronald Jarvis, Leslie Johnston, and John Lemke. If the House could please give them a warm round.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, November 25 is recognized as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. In 1999 the UN General Assembly chose this date to honour the

Mirabal sisters, three political dissidents who were assassinated on November 25, 1960. Each year we remember and honour the contributions and sacrifices of the sisters and of those who work to eliminate violence against women and girls. The date marks the beginning of 16 days of activism against gender violence, and it ends on December 10, international Human Rights Day. The 16 days present an opportunity to change the conversation, change attitudes, and change behaviours to prevent gender violence.

Last year Alberta abusers victimized 10,030 women and children and forced them to utilize women's shelters. Despite our government's increased funding for shelters there are still many women out there who are abused and may need our help. This is unacceptable.

We are responsible to stop gender-based violence. Each of us has the power to create a culture where healthy relationships thrive. I challenge everyone here today to start by paying attention to the words you use and the tone of your conversations. Are they respectful and valuing, or are the demeaning and condescending? Do your words and actions empower or diminish? Do you use your privilege to make another feel less than? Do you understand the importance of consent? Do you laugh when a friend makes a derogatory comment, or do you challenge the behaviour?

Change starts in each of us today, and it must continue well past December 10. It's time to step up, reach out, and speak out. It takes all of us. I will do my part. Will you?

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

Rural Crime

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Frustration about rural crime has risen to a boiling point. That is clearly in evidence today, when we look up and see the galleries filled with residents who have driven hours to send a message to NDP government members who do not seem to understand their concerns or their very real fears. Alberta's population has grown substantially, and with it has come crime. Especially alarming are the guns, the gangs, the drugs, and the violence that have become prevalent in rural Alberta. Citizens are here today because they openly fear for the safety of their families and friends. It is that simple.

Rural Albertans' victimization is different than urban Albertans'. Opposition members have been trying for at least a year and a half to underline the point to the Minister of Justice, but she continues to brush us off. The truth is that while everyone is vulnerable to crime regardless of where you live, rural residents do not see the same response times as do urban residents, and rural detachments confirm this fact. That is why they are encouraging neighbours to look out for each other and also suggesting that they invest in video surveillance systems. Now, those are good measures; however, there is a potential unintended danger of vigilantism, which nobody wants.

Police know that the people they work so hard to protect are at risk, and despite their best efforts they worry about their ability to keep them safe. What has the minister done to acknowledge this rural crisis? Time after time she lays it at the feet of the municipalities. She says: if you want more officers, then hire them yourselves.

This is a province-wide crisis, Mr. Speaker, and the answer is unacceptable. If you don't believe me, then just ask all these people that are in the galleries today.

Thank you.

Krever Blood System Inquiry Anniversary

Dr. Turner: November 21 was the 20th anniversary of the release of the final report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Blood System in Canada, known as the Krever report. I've been a hematologist involved in transfusion medicine in Alberta since 1977. A safe and adequate blood supply is vital for patients with bleeding disorders in particular, but blood products are also used in obstetrics, surgery, and for chemotherapy patients. I testified to the inquiry and have been involved in applying its recommendations to the blood system in Alberta ever since.

2:50

The inquiry was called by the federal government to look into the tainted blood tragedy of the '80s, which is widely recognized as our nation's worst ever preventable public health disaster. The Krever inquiry set a high standard for public inquiries and recommended that all victims of tainted blood receive compensation. It publicly named those who had failed in their duties. Héma-Québec and Canadian Blood Services are a direct result of the inquiry's recommendations.

Because of sophisticated testing and screening anyone now receiving blood products from a Canadian donor can be assured that the risk of viral transmission is very, very low. The final report emphasized the importance of Canada being self-sufficient in its procurement of blood products and that our health care system must remain public and reject the risks of private, paid blood collection. Today our blood system is accountable to Canadians and is founded on the generosity of nonremunerated blood donors from across Canada.

The 20th anniversary of the Krever report reminds us of the time our country came together to change the blood system for the better. The collaboration of funders, regulators, patient groups, and other stakeholders has resulted in a safer and more sustainable blood system for all Canadians. I'm proud to be a part of a government committed to doing everything we can to avoid such a tragedy from ever happening again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Rural Crime

Mr. MacIntyre: Imagine that you chose to raise your family on a quiet, sprawling plot of land in the kind of place where helping your neighbour is a priority and where the word "community" finds its meaning. Now imagine the morning where you've been gone for less than an hour, and as you drive down your driveway, you start to notice that your property isn't how you left it. The bolt locking the shed has been cut. The shed doors are open, and the tools are all gone. The truck you left parked in the driveway isn't there. Your front door is kicked in.

You walk in the house, and your personal possessions are strewn across every room. You panic and search for the things you hold most dear. Maybe you're like Lois Gordon from Strathcona county, and it's your recently deceased mother's urn or maybe the wedding ring that's been passed down from generation to generation. You find those irreplaceable mementoes are gone.

Imagine knowing that someone has been watching you, planning this violation for weeks. Imagine the desperation. Imagine no longer feeling safe in your own home, how it might leave you feeling scared to leave your wife and children on the farm as you go to work in town. Imagine how scared you would feel to be alone,

how you might start to sleep with a baseball bat or something even like a gun next to your bed.

For too many Albertans these traumas aren't imagined; it's their daily reality. And for many it's been repeated multiple times. Rural Alberta is facing an epidemic of increasingly violent crime. Today I rise on behalf of the good people seated in the gallery behind me and in front of me. They deserve an emergency debate on this epidemic. They deserve solutions from their government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Emergency Medical Services and Health Care Funding

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month I had the pleasure of meeting with some Health Sciences members representing EMS workers across the province, including some former colleagues of mine. They were here in Edmonton to argue EMS funding has largely been forgotten and are now faced with significant shortfalls both in personnel and equipment. Calgary and Edmonton alone are facing a shortfall of 12 ambulances each. This may come as a surprise to Albertans who have continued to receive world-class health care from our paramedics and emergency medical services, but to maintain that high level of service in our major cities means calling in trucks from other surrounding municipalities. Of course, this is only a temporary fix and also very expensive.

If we as a province choose to invest much-needed resources into our EMS services, we would see cost savings from reduced overtime, reduced job-related trauma, and reduced hospital wait times. Investing a little to save a lot is a common idea, but it is especially apparent when we're talking about health. Mental health supports, preventative care, addiction treatments: these are all based on the idea that we can not only help people by making these investments early but save public money in the long term.

We need to take that same sort of thinking and apply it to the health system right across the board, and we need to be better at communicating and demonstrating the connection between investing and saving, with targets and tracking measures to gauge that success. When the investments we make in our health system show benefit over the long term, we need to be vocal about that and see where else that investment might apply. When investments aren't successful, we also need to be vocal about that and get back to the drawing board.

Maintaining current levels of health services is expensive, and it isn't going to get any cheaper if we don't start getting smarter about how we deliver them. Failing to act on increasing costs will have real, negative consequences for our health sector and the Albertans it serves. We need to look no further than EMS funding to see why that is. The unrestrained growth in health costs means that even as the health budget jumped significantly year after year, EMS still did not receive the badly needed additional funds. So let's start by addressing the concerns of our front-line EMS workers and move to the next major challenge in our health care system.

And on a note, Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that four paramedics were exposed today to a fentanyl crisis. My thoughts are with them and their families today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Rural Crime

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rates of crime in rural Alberta continue to climb, leaving Alberta with 12 of the top 50 most

dangerous places to live in Canada. According to a recent *Maclean's* article the city of Cold Lake came in at an astounding number 21, which means that the city I live in has almost twice the crime severity index of the Canada-wide average. This is unacceptable.

I often hear accounts from my constituents about crimes they have fallen victim to, including one person who had his truck stolen three times – three times, Mr. Speaker. This is unacceptable.

A Facebook page called Lakeland confessions provides a link for people to confess anonymously. One such post reads in part: "I've already targeted an admin on the neighbourhood [watch] page. And coming for anyone else who thinks they know what's going on . . . You're all a bunch of next victims." This is unacceptable.

People are being brushed aside because that is what insurance is for, yet some of those same people are turned away by insurance companies because they've had too many claims. This is unacceptable.

My constituents and countless others across rural Alberta are frustrated. They're scared, and they've lost hope in this NDP government keeping them safe in their own homes. This Friday a local regional crime forum is set up in my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake because of the clear inactivity of this Justice minister when it comes to rural crime. I'll be attending that forum to hear the concerns of my local residents. Will the Minister of Justice join me to hear the fear, the frustration, and the hopelessness? If not, what answers can I take to them? So far this NDP government is: the right place at the right time, but anywhere but in rural Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation and Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, that motion being:

Be it resolved that pursuant to section 11(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act the Legislative Assembly concur in the recommendations of the final report of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission entitled Proposed Electoral Division Areas, Boundaries, and Names for Alberta: Final Report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, October 2017, which was tabled by the Speaker of the Assembly as an intersessional deposit on October 19, 2017. It is listed as Sessional Paper 456/2017.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I will move the following motion today.

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the growing incidence of property-related crime and an accompanying escalation of violent crime in rural communities and the resulting fear for safety that is felt by the residents of such areas, which now constitute a state of emergency.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 30
An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being
of Working Albertans

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table Bill 30, An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, for first reading.

Mr. Speaker, every year hard-working Albertans are killed or injured on the job, and these incidents don't just affect the workers involved. They affect families, communities, friends, co-workers, and employers. But workplace illnesses and injuries and fatalities are not an inevitable part of life. They can be prevented with proper precautions, public awareness, training, and effective enforcement of legislation. This legislation would ensure that Alberta's health and safety system is continually improving to better prevent injuries from happening, respond to changing hazards, and support an injured worker's return to work. Bill 30 updates both pieces of legislation, Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workers' Compensation Act, for the workplaces of today and tomorrow and respects the rights of all workers.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say thank you to all of the Albertans who contributed to this bill. Thank you to the staff, who have put in countless hours to get this legislation here. Thank you to my guests in the gallery for their contributions as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

3:00 Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Acting Minister of Justice or Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies from the Minister of Justice to her federal counterpart, the federal Minister of Justice, the Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould, pushing the federal government to fill the vacant Court of Queen's Bench positions. She highlights that Alberta was left under the previous federal government with the lowest number of superior court judges per capita of any province in the country, and we're asking the current federal government to fill those positions as quickly as possible.

The Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to table the Lakeland confessions anonymous post on Facebook that is pretty much calling out everybody that's on the local watch.

I have several e-mails from local constituents that are saying that rural crime is a real problem in Bonnyville-Cold Lake and that this is something that is not being addressed.

Lastly, I have an article in the *Bonnyville Nouvelle*: RCMP Combating Rising Crime. This is something that is very, very disappointing to see, that we had no answers today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table documents with respect to the Airdrie provincial rural detachment, letters from the Balzac business community, as well as a letter that was received from the Minister of Justice with respect to things that were going on in Balzac and that community as well as the RCMP enhanced policing services, which was what was recommended to the people of Balzac given the fact that there is not enough policing

to help with their current situation. This is with respect to the CrossIron properties. Since 2013 to 2016 there has been a 280 per cent increase in crime.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of tablings today. The first is from a hard-working couple in the Spruce View area in my constituency in Red Deer county, expressing their absolute disgust with the way that crime is being treated in their community.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is also from Red Deer county from another hard-working family that has been robbed over half a dozen times, again, while this government sits on their hands.

The last tabling, Mr. Speaker, is from the Eckville and Lacombe county area, from another family who has been robbed repeatedly and is looking for help from this government.

The Speaker: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings, all letters from individuals who are extremely frustrated, fearful, and concerned about rural crime. One references the fact that the best response time in the particular area where they live is 45 minutes, and in many cases it's actually four to five hours. How that is supposed to curtail crime, I don't understand. Anyway, I provide the three letters as constituents have asked that we do that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of a number of letters from constituents of mine who have been writing in regarding the multiple times that they have been robbed. This one is from Lisa: "It disgusts me that just because we're in a rural area, some people think that they can trespass on our property" and take what they want.

Here is a letter from one of my constituents. Their farm has been robbed five times in the last 12 months. This is unacceptable.

I have another one here where they are concerned that: if we try to defend ourselves, we will be called the criminals by this government. Five copies for you.

Here is a family who was robbed, and then the day they went to the police station to finalize their statements, their home was robbed again.

Here's another one from people within my riding. They're concerned that the same people that robbed them are now back on the street robbing some more.

Another one regarding the same kind of thing, the revolving door at the courthouse. I have hundreds of these coming in. I'm not going to give them all to you today, sir, but you will be getting them all.

It's time to bring back front licence plates. How can we see who's coming in our yard on video camera? They want the front licence plate on that vehicle noted.

Here's another one. They're afraid the legal system is just releasing and releasing criminals back out into the public. This has to stop.

Another one from my riding to the minister again. A copy was sent to me regarding the reckless and dangerous behaviours of criminals who have vandalized their place and, I believe, injured their dog.

Here's another one from Jim from my area regarding crime being totally out of control: it's like anarchy; what happened to my Alberta?

Another one. They just go on and on. It's the same thing over and over. All of these letters, Mr. Speaker, are from multiple robberies, not just one.

Another one. Their truck was broken into in the church parking lot.

I'll give them all to you. This is an epidemic, and we need a debate on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have two tablings today. The first I would like to table are five copies of the DVD and attached letter to the 87 electoral division boundaries from the 2016-17 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission final report.

Second, I rise to table five copies of the 2016-17 annual report of the Child and Youth Advocate, received in my office on November 27, 2017.

Chestermere-Rocky View-Three Hills. Excuse me.

Mr. Cooper: Whichever. It's okay. She's better than me anyway.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a copy of a letter from Lorraine Richards and her husband Jerry of Olds, Alberta, who state, "In our opinion, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General is the weak link in a failing justice system in Alberta." They raise some significant concerns about the amount of times that they have been broken into, the amount of property damage that they have sustained, and the fact that it has come at a significant cost to their personal financial well-being.

I also will table two documents from the village of Carbon that highlight a number of the concerns that I raised in question period today with respect to the continued break-ins at the grocery store as well as other local businesses and the fact that the community is doing a security block party to try to find some solutions that certainly aren't coming from the provincial government.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. S. Anderson, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Government Organization Act authorized accredited agencies summary, April 2016, Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Association annual report 2016-17, Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta annual report 2016, pursuant to the Safety Codes Act the Safety Codes Council annual report 2016.

3:10

The Speaker: I believe we may be at points of order. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first point of order I rise on today is under 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." The Premier, in response to a question to me at the time that the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, I believe, called that point of order, implied – no; it didn't imply. She outright stated that the motion that we are going to vote on shortly was in fact out of order. But the fact is that written notice has been provided to you, the Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 30(1), and it has met the conditions of Standing Order 30(7). It's stamped. It's up at the table right now. In fact, you are going to put that question to the House at some point today and make a decision.

She was wrong, and by implying and answering that question with that I was misleading the House or had some sort of a motion that was not in order, it's ridiculous and is exactly the Premier and her government running away from the fact that in a few moments they'll have a choice, the choice to stand with Albertans on a serious issue or to vote against it and run and hide.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To suggest that it is against the rules to say that someone believes that a motion may not conform with the rules of the House and to attempt to equate that with accusing a member of misleading the House is absurd. This is one of the silliest points of order I have ever seen. The Premier is entirely within her rights to suggest that their motion is out of order. In fact, I'll think we'll see some further arguments to that just a bit later in the afternoon, and I hope he doesn't stand up on a point of order about that.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, I do have the Blues. This is what it said, and I won't read all of it: "the proposal that they're putting forward is undoubtedly outside of the rules of the House although we'll see what happens when the matter is discussed." In this particular instance I don't believe there is a point of order. It may have been a difference of opinion, but nonetheless I don't believe it's a point of order in this instance because what we've always talked about is context.

I'm prepared to hear point of order two, which I think is you, Government House Leader.

Point of Order Allegations against Members

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise on this. I'm rising on a point of order under Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j), which read as follows:

- 23 A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member . . .
- (h) makes allegations against another Member;
 - (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;
 - (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

Today in question period the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition made the absolutely outrageous claim that if the government does not support his motion, we are in some way standing with criminals. To accuse the government of being on the side of criminals is offensive and extreme, Mr. Speaker. The government has taken a number of actions on this important issue, actions that have been outlined by the Premier and the minister today in question period.

Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of the equally outrageous claim made by the Member for Calgary-Elbow where he claimed that due to the actions of the government "whoever murdered Serenity is walking free today." At the time I wrote on a matter of privilege to argue that such overblown rhetoric impinged on the privileges of the member in question.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that one needs to watch one's language when it comes to members of the House, and to suggest that the government's position relative to their order, which we only heard about just a few hours ago for the first time, is somehow equivalent to being on the side of criminals or supporting crime in some way offends the standing orders, it offends the practices of the Assembly, and it is beneath the hon. member to make those statements.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a matter of debate. I did not, in my question, accuse anybody in the government or the Premier of being a criminal. What I said very clearly was that either the government was going to stand with my constituents and the people of rural Alberta who are being victimized and abused every day or they may as well be standing with the criminals. You know what? I stand by that fact one hundred per cent. Either you're going to stand with Albertans, or you're going to continue to allow them to be abused on your watch. That is extremely disappointing, and it's disappointing to watch the Government House Leader try to defend the ridiculous actions of this government this way.

The Speaker: Well, the hon. member may recall that at the time I heard the comment, I rose in the House, and I cautioned. I do now have the Blues. In fact, what was said was: "Mr. Speaker, if you're not in support of this motion, you may as well be with the criminals that are victimizing my constituents." [interjections] Hon. member, I'm making the decision now. It's irrelevant to me whether or not you believe it's true. The important part is what I decide.

Mr. Nixon: I believe it's true, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I do believe this was a point of order, and I would ask that you withdraw the comment.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: I rise for you to explain your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

Mr. Nixon: I rise on a standing order for you to explain your ruling. Just to clarify, Mr. Speaker, I rise on 13(2) for you to explain your ruling because it's quite a contradiction from most of the rulings that you've made on this issue before the House.

The Speaker: Well, I think I did explain my reasoning on this. You might have noticed that I also drew attention to the word – I can't exactly remember, but there was a minister that I cautioned at a different point in the House. When we are alleging, making comments in this House that other members are associating with criminals, it seems to me that you've crossed a line, and that is my reasoning. That is my reasoning, and it shall stand.

Point of order number 3. I think that is yours.

Mr. Nixon: That is mine, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I would request that you withdraw the comment.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I will certainly withdraw and apologize for pointing out that the government is standing with criminals and not with my constituents. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

You withdraw your comments, and you apologize to the House. Is that right?

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and apologize for pointing out that the government is standing with criminals against my constituents.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I would have preferred a more sincere apology, but it seems to me that there might be other objectives in play.

Nonetheless, the Leader of the Official Opposition. Point of order number 3.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 23(h),(i), and (j) in regard to a comment by the Minister of Finance at the time that that point of order was raised, at which point he used what I would call swear words and certainly, actually were swear words. I won't repeat them in the House, but he used some language with the word "bull" in front of it and then a swear word. It's disappointing, at a time when these galleries are full of people, again, who are being victimized across rural Alberta, that a minister of the Crown would stand in here and use that language and treat it like a joke. I would ask him to stand up, withdraw, and apologize for his words.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

3:20

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear the words that were allegedly spoken by the hon. Finance minister. I don't know if the hon. Opposition House Leader at this point is looking to qualify for an acting school, but the grandstanding today is pretty outrageous. If indeed – if indeed – the Minister of Finance uttered words that are unparliamentary in this House or insulting to members opposite, then on his behalf I will withdraw those words and apologize to the House.

The Speaker: Thank you. Nor did I hear the comment, but I appreciate that you have acknowledged and apologized.

Number 4, I believe, is also the Leader of the Official Opposition's.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on this one on 23(h), (i), and (j), also on *Beauchesne's* 493. At the time that this point of order was raised, the minister of postsecondary and Acting Minister of Justice accused the leader of the United Conservative Party, the Hon. Jason Kenney, of stealing. He used the exact word "stealing." In fact, at the time you cautioned him on the way he was going down that road. It is completely ridiculous that, again, at a time that the people of Alberta, hundreds of people, have driven here to be able to express their concerns about what's happening in their communities, another minister would stand and accuse a leader of another political party of stealing instead of standing up and defending their record. It's ridiculous, and I ask that the minister stand and withdraw and apologize for those comments.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, these rules apply traditionally when directed at a member of the House, but I'm also aware of the rulings that have been made many times in this place by Speakers, yourself included, that people who are not in the House and can't defend themselves require a certain degree of caution on the part of members. Now, having said that, Mr. Kenney is, of course, the leader of the party that forms the Official Opposition and is a very political figure.

But, having said that, Mr. Speaker, I did hear the word "steal," and in my view that word was inappropriate. On behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education I would withdraw that and apologize to the House.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I did hear "stealing," and I appreciate the thought that the minister – that's thus the reason why I cautioned in the first instance.

If I might bring closure to the matter, these are two examples of what ought not to happen in this House.

Request for Emergency Debate

Rural Crime

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to propose a motion under Standing Order 30. I should note before I begin that written notice was provided to the Speaker in accordance with Standing Order 30(1) and has met the conditions of Standing Order 30(7). The motion reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the growing incidence of property-related crime and an accompanying escalation of violent crime in rural communities and the resulting fear for safety that is felt by residents of such areas, which now constitute a state of emergency.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the importance of this issue facing rural communities across Alberta, facing rural communities that I live in and rural communities that the people in the gallery, that are here today, live in. Skyrocketing crime rates across rural Alberta have been a source of major concerns for residents in these communities for several years now.

The Speaker: If I might, just a moment.

For the sake of all of the House members, the thrust of this discussion and the objective on your part at this point is – and I quote 30(2) – “The Member may briefly state the arguments in favour.” So the issue at hand here is the urgency of the matter, and I just want all members of the House to be aware of that.

Please continue.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s gotten to the point where a great many rural Alberta families no longer feel safe in their own homes. That is simply unacceptable, and I would say that that’s urgent. As I got in my car to drive up here last night and spend the week with you, I worry about my family back home in rural Alberta because of what’s happening. I would say that that’s urgent. That’s why today the United Conservative caucus stands united with victims from across the province to urge this government to allow emergency debate on a provincial response to what has fast become a crisis in our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this issue is not before this House in any form of bill debate, and the most reasonable opportunity for debate is today. I would like to reference *Beauchesne’s* 387 to 398, regarding motions to adjourn the House to discuss an important matter. Standing Order 30(7)(a) states, “The matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration,” as you were pointing out. If the sharp escalation in crime across rural Alberta doesn’t constitute a genuine emergency, I don’t know what does. Over the last year alone breaking and enterings are up more than 130 per cent in Bonnyville and 94 per cent in Innisfail, just to give two examples.

Beauchesne’s 390 also states that a motion for emergency debate must meet the test of urgency; that is, “when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.” Our caucus believes that when it comes to the well-being of Alberta’s families, when the safety of Albertans is at stake, nothing is more urgent than this. Over the last number of years members from both of the UCP legacy caucuses have raised this issue in the House over and over again, yet we have not seen any meaningful action from this

government at all. It is our hope, Mr. Speaker, that an emergency debate will bring much-needed attention to this critical issue that is affecting so many of the communities that we represent.

Beauchesne’s 389 states that the matter “must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate [action].” I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this issue, if not dealt with in a real and comprehensive way, will be nothing short of a suffering of the public interest. I think that the fact that we have over 100 rural Albertans here in the gallery today demonstrates just how much this debate is in the public interest. Quite frankly, it’s a sad state of affairs indeed when that many concerned citizens need to descend upon this Legislature in order to get this government to pay attention.

I’ll continue with a quote from *Beauchesne’s* page 113. “Most decisions based on these conditions are bound to be subjective and few clear cut decisions can be made. In making his ruling, the Speaker may, on occasion, take into account the general wish of the House to have a debate.” Mr. Speaker, hundreds of families have been victims of crime in rural communities, and they are depending on your decision that this matter is urgent enough to proceed. I consider this to be an emergency. I would suggest to you that you consider the last point, where *Beauchesne’s* says, “In making his ruling, the Speaker may, on occasion, take into account the general wish of the House to have a debate.”

House of Commons Procedure and Practice says the following on page 695:

However, in one exceptional circumstance, an application was approved for an emergency debate on “the sudden and unexpected revelation of events which [had] taken place in the past [and] that . . . might precipitate a course of conduct which, if allowed to continue unchecked, would certainly classify itself as an emergency and a matter of urgent consideration.”

Mr. Speaker, the system is failing Albertans in rural communities, who now live their lives in fear of not if but when their homes will be broken into and their property stolen. They live in fear that they might be home with their children the next time these criminals show up. They’ve lost sleep waking at every noise and wondering if this is the moment that they have dreaded.

We need to do everything in our power to make sure that the problem does not get worse, and that can start right now. This is a public crisis, and it must be dealt with in this Assembly as a state of emergency. I ask you to rule in favour of this important motion, Mr. Speaker. The people that I represent are depending on you. When I went home this weekend, if you want to hear about urgency, I heard of four more people in my community that suffered through home invasions, including some having firearms pointed at their heads in front of their children. Every day that members in rural Alberta go home, this is the number one thing that we hear from our constituents. They are sick of being victimized, and they want a debate in this Assembly right now so we can see some solid action to get ahead of this issue once and for all.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can say unequivocally that the issue of crime and safety in our communities is very important to the government, and it’s a matter that we take extremely seriously. We believe that all Albertans deserve to live in safe and strong communities. Now, I know that the Acting Minister of Justice is meeting this afternoon with many of the representatives here today, and we have, as he pointed out, made changes to ensure that police officers are on the street instead of doing paperwork. We’ve funded ALERT, which last week laid more than 120 charges against 11 suspects for dealing drugs. The

ICE unit is going after online sexual exploitation of children, and the new integrated crime reduction unit is targeting property crime and break-ins in rural Alberta. This is indeed a very important and, in fact, critical issue across the province.

3:30

I can relate to the feelings of people in rural Alberta who are represented by some of the people in the gallery today. In our family our vehicle has been broken into twice in the last couple of months, and I can tell you that that provides a feeling of insecurity and violation, so there's no doubt. And I know that other members in the House on both sides have probably had some similar experiences.

So being a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker, doesn't necessarily satisfy the criteria for this particular Standing Order 30. It must meet a number of conditions, including that it "must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration."

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* – you know, I know that I'm wowing you, hon. member, but I sat quietly through your application, and I would appreciate it if you would do it as well for me. [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Mason: The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* provides further guidance.

An emergency debate should be on a topic "that is immediately relevant and of attention and concern throughout the nation."

That, of course, applies to the federal House of Commons.

Thus, matters of chronic or continuing concern, such as economic conditions, unemployment rates and constitutional matters, have tended to be set aside whereas topics deemed to require urgent consideration [have not].

Beauchesne similarly states that the item

must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention.

Another significant factor has to do with whether there are further opportunities to debate the matter. *Beauchesne* states that an item must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

And that is the significant piece, Mr. Speaker, that I want to draw attention to.

There must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

It also states that

emergency debate provisions cannot be used to debate [such] "items which, in a regular legislative program of the House of Commons and regular legislative consideration, can come before the House by way of amendments to existing statutes, or in any case will come before it in other ways.

That's on page 694.

Speaker Kowalski put it well on May 26, 2008, regarding gas prices.

I guess the whole question in here: if it's urgent today, why wouldn't it have been urgent a month ago?

Well, that's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because that is the point that, unfortunately, in the rules and in the precedents of the House I believe the Speaker has to consider. Whether or not it's serious or even extremely serious is not the question. The question is: is it an emergency happening now, or is it something that's happened over a longer period of time, in which case there are ample opportunities in the House to debate this?

He went on to say that:

Actually, I understand that this is of great interest to a lot of people, but in terms of is it an emergency today when it was not an emergency a month ago and will it be an emergency of the same latitude in a month from now, it's quite interesting.

[interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Additionally, Mr. Speaker, when there are other avenues in which to debate a matter, it does not qualify for Standing Order 30.

Speaker Zwozdesky set a very high bar in 2013, when he allowed debate to proceed regarding medevac services.

I'm taking into account that the move of the medevac [to the] . . .

Airport is occurring tomorrow.

There's the difference. It's occurring tomorrow.

Therefore, I find that there will be no other opportunity for this Assembly to debate this issue, which is of importance to many Albertans.

Speaker Kowalski again made the same case in ruling that the allegations of conflict of interest involving Premier Redford in the choice of lawyers for tobacco recovery lawsuits should not proceed, and he said:

Urgency deals with whether or not there are other opportunities available to raise the matter. Now, I want to clarify for you that there are several vehicles available for you to do a variety of things. One of them is question period, where a well-crafted question that meets the rules and proprieties of this House and of Houses across the world that are part of the Commonwealth parliamentary system – that exists there as one of those vehicles.

Secondly, a carefully crafted motion for return might accomplish something very similar, or a carefully worded written question might accomplish something similar. There is room for some debate within some of these vehicles.

That was November 28, 2012.

I might also add that the opposition has opportunities to introduce private members' bills and to introduce private members' motions, and time is set aside on Mondays for exactly that purpose, so they have ample opportunity to raise this. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they raised it extensively today in question period. That can be certainly supplemented, but they have other opportunities which do not require the setting aside of the regularly scheduled business of the House.

Mr. Speaker, having established that whether emergency deals with a matter or not, there are other opportunities available to raise the matter. I can indicate that there are a great many avenues of debate in this Legislature. The opposition has raised this matter a number of times in the past in the spring sitting of the Assembly, but in reviewing *Hansard*, it seems that until today the Official Opposition has chosen not to raise this matter in question period during this fall sitting. However, the fact that the members opposite chose not to avail themselves of those avenues does not mean that it should be considered under SO 30.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just conclude . . .

The Speaker: Brevity.

Mr. Mason: Obviously, it is your job and your duty under Standing Order 30 to rule whether or not the request for a standing order is in order, and should you so rule, Mr. Speaker, the government caucus will be prepared to debate the motion.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you're rising to what?

Mr. Cooper: To speak to the matter of emergency.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Mason: It is the custom of the House and has been as long as I can remember that these matters are not debated before the Speaker. The person who makes the motion has a chance to state it, and then a member of the other party has a chance to respond, and other parties, if the Speaker uses his discretion, are also invited to respond. But it is not a debate, and you don't get to refute the arguments that have been made endlessly in the House.

The Speaker: There is a leader of the third party. Any wish to speak to this? Private members?

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, I'll be very, very brief. I do believe that this is a matter of great urgency. Notwithstanding the fact that the Official Opposition has raised several questions here today in the presence of so many Albertans, I do believe that given the data and statistics that have been presented today and the stories that I've been told as leader of the Alberta Party caucus from talking with not just my constituents but with many Albertans, this is a grave concern to many people. I would really encourage you to allow this debate to proceed because I do believe that not only is it important, but it does in fact constitute an emergency.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The independent Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, to be very brief, I would certainly also agree that this is a matter of urgency and it is, in fact, a pressing emergency, and I felt that perhaps while the hon. Government House Leader said that we shouldn't engage in a debate as to whether this is an emergency, I found his arguments to be extremely weak on behalf of saying that this is not an emergency.

I'd just like to quote a statistic that was raised at a town hall discussion on this issue, that I hosted in Mannville on October 25, in which the Vermilion RCMP detachment announced that while the number of incidents of property crime in our constituency from June through August averaged 48 per month, in the month of September that number had risen to 169.

Now, the minister argues that this isn't an emergency. Try and tell that to the people that are sitting in the galleries, Mr. Speaker.

3:40

The Speaker: Hon. member, is there any additional information that you can add to the discussion that speaks to the urgency of the matter?

Mr. Fraser: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We're elected in this House to represent our constituents. When a number of constituents come with a concern to this Legislature, it is abysmal that the Government House Leader is not taking this opportunity to show how government can be nimble and address this concern.

Now, the hon. Government House Leader mentioned that there were all these courses that we in the opposition could use to address this issue. They did mention the statistics, whether it's funding of ALERT, going back and forth – Mr. Speaker, bear with me – at the end of the day, what the heck are we supposed to be doing here other than representing the constituents? And exactly like the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster said, tell that to the people who are afraid to go down their driveway, worrying if they're going to get hit with a bat. I don't know any other reason why or what we would be debating this afternoon that's more important than protecting these fine people.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe this is the second issue that I've needed to deal with as this kind of incident in this Chamber. As with all of the decisions that we make in here, none of them don't rank up in terms of importance, and each causes us to listen not only to our own arguments but to each other.

I am prepared to rule on whether the request for a leave for motion is to proceed under Standing Order 30. The Leader of the Official Opposition has met the requirement of providing at least two hour's notice to the Speaker's office by providing the required notice at 10:47 a.m. this morning. The motion reads as follows.

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the growing incidence of property-related crime and an accompanying escalation of violent crime in rural communities and the resulting fear . . .

[interjections] Hon. members. Hon. member, if we could focus on the listening part.

. . . for safety that is felt by residents of such areas, which now constitute a state of emergency.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject are pages 689 through to 696 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and *Beauchesne's* paragraphs 387 to 390. As is noted on page 690 of the second edition of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

matters of chronic or continuing concern, such as economic conditions, unemployment rates and constitutional matters, have tended to be set aside whereas topics deemed to require [emergency] consideration have included work stoppages and strikes, natural disasters, and international crises and events.

This House, I believe, and certainly we all appreciate that there is no doubt that Albertans' safety and feeling of safety in the province are absolutely important issues. The member notes in his motion that crime in rural communities is increasing, but the member did not point to any particular instances that would give rise to a genuine emergency as required by Standing Order 30(7).

Accordingly, I do not find the request for leave in order, and the question will not be put.

Orders of the Day

Written Questions

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Autopsy Completion Times

Q18. Mr. Ellis asked that the following question be accepted.

In each of the calendar years from 2013 to 2016 what was the average completion time for an autopsy and what was the longest time spent completing an autopsy at the office of the Chief Medical Examiner?

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can tell you that this specific question arose out of the tragic incident of little Serenity, which, I believe, has affected everyone in this Legislature. I think we all, as a matter of public record, understand that Serenity's autopsy investigation took two years.

If we're going to do our jobs as legislators, if we're going to make the system better, I believe that this is a question that needs to be answered. We need to know how long an autopsy investigation is going to take or what the average is for an autopsy investigation to find out if it is comparable to other jurisdictions and whether there are efficiencies that we can do to make the system better. It's not

about, you know, pointing fingers. It is about doing what is right for people who are victims of homicides and, of course, their families to ensure that we get proper numbers to understand how long an autopsy investigation is taking within this province and figure out what measures we can take to correct that and make it better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice I would be pleased to move that Written Question 18 be amended by striking out “an autopsy” wherever it occurs and substituting “a death investigation.” The amended written question would read as follows:

In each of the calendar years from 2013 to 2016 what was the average completion time for a death investigation and what was the longest time spent completing a death investigation at the office of the Chief Medical Examiner?

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the minister I want to make just a few comments. A postmortem autopsy is a specialized surgical procedure that consists of a thorough examination of the deceased by dissection to determine the cause and manner of death. Routine postmortem examinations can take one or two hours, with complex cases taking upwards of four to six hours. A death investigation involves a complete review of the history, circumstances, and autopsy findings, with additional laboratory investigations by the medical examiner. Death investigation cases may require additional time for consultation with external experts such as in neuropathology and consultations with the police if the case is part of a criminal investigation.

As the term “death investigation” is inclusive of all of the steps taken from the initiation of the investigation to case file closure, this amendment is intended to provide a more fulsome response to the question.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has moved an amendment to Written Question 18. Would anybody like to debate the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

3:50

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Government House Leader. I believe that we’re at least on a co-operative path to finding a solution to this actual question. I guess my concern about the words “death investigation” is that at the time, of course, of somebody’s passing, you know, we have an investigation that occurs, and then the completion of the investigation, from my perspective as a former law enforcement officer, would ultimately be the time when we essentially hand it to the Crown prosecutors’ office, which would be the length of the investigation.

For me, I certainly understand, upon reflection and looking at the original question where it says, “How long does an autopsy take,” okay, well, is it from the time that the doctor conducts his initial investigation until the time he concludes it? You know, is that a matter of minutes, hours, or longer? The way I see it is: how long does the autopsy investigation take place? So, really, from the time that the Chief Medical Examiner’s office receives that request from the law enforcement officer, how long does it take for them to conclude their investigation?

There are some variables, but I think it is important to know how long not the entire death investigation is but, the way I see it, and I’m only one person here, the actual autopsy investigation conducted by the Chief Medical Examiner’s office, from the time they get the request to the time that they are able to provide that

information back to law enforcement, which either supports the suspicion of a homicide taking place or basically says that it’s nonsuspicious.

Is it possible, Government House Leader through Madam Speaker, that we amend this even further to say:

In each of the calendar years from 2013 to 2016 what was the average completion time for an autopsy investigation and what was the longest time spent completing an autopsy investigation at the office of the Chief Medical Examiner?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I am acting on behalf of the expectant hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, I’m not in a position to respond to the suggestion, unfortunately. So I have no choice under those circumstances but to suggest that we need to proceed with the amendment as I have put it forward.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-West, I just need to clarify that the initial amendment had been approved by Parliamentary Counsel. A counteramendment to the amendment, the subamendment, would have had to have gone through Parliamentary Counsel. So we can’t accept a subamendment as of now, but we can still debate the amendment.

Just a reminder to all members of the House that you can only speak once to the amendment. I do see that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays would like to speak.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m grateful for the opportunity to stand on Written Question 18 from the Member for Calgary-West. I think most people at home listening to this would find it quite reasonable that he’s asking: “In each of the calendar years from 2013 to 2016 what was the average completion time for an autopsy and what was the longest time spent completing an autopsy at the office of the Chief Medical Examiner?”

Madam Speaker, I think that if there was ever a question that was worthy of being answered, this is it. For each of the cases in those years, of course, each one represents a life that has ended and a life that has ended in circumstances that would actually require the medical examiner to do an autopsy, I would suggest a much more than normal examination other than determining that someone is dead and why they’re dead because autopsies often – sometimes it is a medical issue, but very often it’s also to get details for what might have happened as the result of a crime or a violent act or some other . . .

Mr. Mason: An accident.

Mr. McIver: Or an accident. I agree with that, Government House Leader. Despite the fact that I’ve got the floor, I’ll actually take that with gratitude. That’s a good suggestion.

Madam Speaker, for each of these instances I’m of the belief that the medical examiner would have both the record of when the file on the deceased person arrived in their office – I’ll be surprised if they don’t already have a record of all the seconds, minutes, days, and hours that they spent working on the autopsy. I realize that when you see these things on television, it’s all automated, and that may or may not be the case, but whether it is or not, I would be surprised if the medical examiner did not keep a very detailed logbook of which deceased person they were working on and for exactly how long and their impressions and their learnings from the work they do.

It occurs to me that this should be almost, if not completely, readily available information. In each case it represents the final determination of how a life ended. Because it deals with how well we determine our investigations at the end of a life, I think it really speaks to how important it is.

I don't know what purpose the government would have for not wanting to provide this information unless there's something in there that they don't want the public to know. They may have a different explanation, and I welcome that if they offer it. All I'm saying is that from my viewpoint that's certainly what comes to my mind, that there's something that's true that the government doesn't want the public to know about. Again, I will repeat that I welcome the government to give a different explanation. But without the explanation to be offered, Madam Speaker, I don't know what other conclusion the public would draw here.

If I might go there, every life matters, and as a consequence every death matters. During this period of time there is certainly the file that's been talked about a lot in this House, the file of young Serenity. I think that all members from all sides of the House – I would be surprised if they didn't all unanimously believe that Serenity's file was not handled well, surely not as well as it could have been and should have been.

My belief is that the hon. Member for Calgary-West is trying to cast a light on this and any other files that take place in order that this House might understand it better and in order that this House might make either budgetary recommendations, legislative recommendations, policy recommendations either for ourselves or to the different police services or to the different medical examiners or indeed to the medical system at large to such an extent that it may have an effect on the autopsies and how long they take to be completed.

Of course, the facts surrounding how someone dies when the medical examiner does that in some circumstances may well affect how a court case goes on an untimely, criminal, or accidental death. It may well affect recommendations that get made by the Legislative Assembly or by the medical examiner about the safety, perhaps, of a piece of equipment, of a place, a time, a business. It could be anything from playground equipment to the way that the police do their business to a whole range of, in every case, important issues when they indeed affect how someone's life comes to an end.

Madam Speaker, I would sincerely hope that the government would actually draw back from their amendment and support the original written question from the Member for Calgary-West because I think any other decision will unfortunately cast aspersions on what might be hidden. That's why I would be in favour very much of answering the original question rather than trying to reformulate it, redocument it, switch it around, particularly, if I might, since it was from – with all due respect, it's not from me; it's from the Member for Calgary-West.

Why is that important? Because the Member for Calgary-West has served as a police officer for a long time, and his knowledge of what's important and what's not about what the medical examiner's office does I would suggest to you is, I know, far above mine. There may be a few members of the House that have knowledge as good as the Member for Calgary-West's but, I would suggest to you, not very many of us. So when he asks this question, it's not a random question. It's actually a question more informed than most of us would be able to ask because of his professional background; all the more reason to indeed answer the original question rather than some other question that the government has concocted.

Thank you.

4:00

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to make a couple of comments in response to the Member for Calgary-Hays. Unfortunately, we do have very tragic events that happen in our constituencies and in our constituents' lives. I had the honour of having a local constituent talk to me about an investigation that was going on with her daughter that was on its way through the courts and about the incredible pain that I witnessed in this mother's experience with that. I completely understand, especially losing two members of my own family in the last couple of weeks, that having closure of a death in your family is one of those final pieces that are important to finding some peace and being able to move forward and have that person's memory be fully intact.

I just wanted to draw attention to something that I had learned in going through this story that this mother had to tell me. One of the important things in talking with those that are on the other side, that deal with these cases, is that "death investigation" is the term used by the office of the Chief Medical Examiner and that this office does not have data for something that would be an "autopsy investigation." It's my understanding that the term "death investigation" is the term that will provide the member opposite with the information that he is seeking.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?
Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the original question, Question 18. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the question as amended?

Seeing none, hon. Member for Calgary-West, would you like to close debate?

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know what? As I previously indicated through you to the Government House Leader, this is a nonpartisan issue. I do thank the Member for Calgary-Hays. A lot of thought went into this particular question. I think it is very important to get an answer to this question so that we can have an understanding of the system so that we as a group of legislators can better the system for victims of homicide such as in little Serenity's case.

I thank you for the response and the terminology that the Chief Medical Examiner's office uses in regard to death investigation. I will state again through you, Madam Speaker, that it is important to know the information: from the time that the Chief Medical Examiner receives that request to the time that they conduct their autopsy investigation, or, as you indicated, death investigation, to go back to the police officers so that they can conclude what they need to do to determine if something is indeed an accident or indeed a suspicious event. So thank you; I think this was a good co-operative test. Hopefully, the rest of the week will play out in that way as well.

I'd like to thank both sides of this House for supporting this question. I hope we get the answer that we are looking for to better the system. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Written Question 18 as amended carried]

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

**Bill 207
Regulatory Burden Reduction Act**

[Debate adjourned November 14]

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 207, Regulatory Burden Reduction Act. The purpose of this bill is to protect businesses and, actually, government, too, from excessive red tape. As members of this Assembly our job is to make new legislation that is in line with the developing needs of our constituencies and, in fact, all Albertans.

As society evolves, our laws must also adapt, but that begs the question: what should be done with the dated regulations that only serve as an obstacle to growth? Well, Madam Speaker, the short answer is to repeal them. Bill 207 proposes that for every single new regulation implemented, one or more regulations are eliminated. Now, we know that the free market regulates itself more efficiently than government can, so there are obviously a lot of these regulations that have been in place for many years that need to be reviewed.

Now, as far as just a little bit of history about myself, one of the reasons that I'm here in the Legislature today, that I've gotten deeply involved in politics, was a small business that I ran myself that involved exporting products. The exporting of products required both a provincial permit and a federal permit. At the time I started my business, I could go into a local office and get both permits. The information required for those permits was the exact same for both the provincial and for the federal, so the provincial government at the time had decided that they would take care of both of those permit processes in one office at one time. I could walk in there with the information, and I could walk out with both permits.

Well, somewhere along the way somebody decided that the provincial government wasn't going to do the federal government permits anymore. What they did was that they put that back into the hands of the federal government in Ottawa. So the process right now is that I go to the local office with this information to get a provincial permit, and then I send the exact same information to the federal government in Ottawa and wait six weeks for the permit to come back. Here we have a situation where regulations don't make sense. The government has refused to take back that process. Now, if I went to British Columbia and did the exact same thing, I could walk into one provincial office and walk out with both the provincial and federal permits. It only makes sense because it's the exact same information that's needed for both permits.

Somewhere along the way somebody said: well, the provincial government doesn't want to pay to do this permit process for the federal government. But what was forgotten in that comment is that no matter where that permit process takes place, it's paid for by the taxpayer. It's paid for by me, by all of us, so why not do it in the most efficient way possible? Whether it's done in the provincial office or the federal office, I have to pay for it. We as taxpayers have to pay for it. Wouldn't it make sense that you walk into one office once, get the permits, walk out? That's the most efficient way. It actually adds to the cost two to three times, the government dealing with it by having it done at two different places.

In business there are the three Ws: walking, waiting, and working. With those three Ws, there's only one of those that generates revenue, that actually gets anything done. You're not

getting anything done when you're in business walking; you're not getting anything done when you're in business waiting. Only when you're working. Regulations, burdensome regulations that don't accomplish anything: we need to reduce those so that small business can be spending more time working, being productive.

4:10

Now, some of these regulations you could compare to, let's say, Betamax videos or eight-track tapes or anything like that. I mean, is there any advantage to having a Betamax video player in your home if you don't have any Betamax videos to play in it? Do you need to have an eight-track player in your truck if you don't have any eight-track tapes? It's the same with a lot of these regulations. It makes no sense to have them if they're so outdated that they're unusable, that they have no purpose.

Here are a couple of Canadian regulations that you might find interesting. If you live in Souris, Prince Edward Island, it's against the law to build a snowman taller than 30 inches. Having an Internet connection faster than 56 K is illegal in Uxbridge, Ontario. Well, there are a couple of good regulations. How about this one? This is right at home here. You cannot paint a wooden ladder in Alberta according to 2009's occupational health and safety code. This is apparently to ensure that you can tell the condition of such a ladder. "A wooden ladder may be preserved with a transparent protective coating." That's according to the code. You can't paint a ladder here in Alberta. There are just a couple ideas of some regulations that, you know, don't make sense. I'm sure there are lots more.

Anyway, in this bill for each regulation created, one or more regulations will be eliminated. The federal Conservative government saved Canadian businesses over \$32 million in administrative burden as well as 750,000 hours in time spent dealing with red tape each year. Now, that's substantial. Regulatory compliance costs are disproportionately borne by small businesses and small and medium-sized firms that constitute the largest segment of the Canadian economy. A one-size-fits-all approach to paperwork does not necessarily work, and it hobbles small business.

I think we see it a lot in government, too. In government they have layers of bureaucracy and layers of paperwork that's redundant. We don't need that. The people that are there to serve us in government, the front-line people, need to be serving patients, serving the people, serving students, whatever that is. Shuffling paper is not a service. Doing regulations that don't make sense anymore is not a service to the people. That's one of the biggest things. We see how expensive things are in Alberta in government compared to other jurisdictions. Some of that has to do with the amount of regulation that we have to deal with here that isn't necessary.

Of course, we have to have some regulations. There's no doubt about it. That's our job here, to create, you know, bills that help Albertans, but we need to make sure that we don't have a burdensome number of regulations in place.

Now, stakeholders like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business support legislation that reduces the administrative burden on businesses. Outdated regulations are a silent killer of jobs. Canadian business owners spend over \$30 billion a year on regulatory compliance; \$30 billion a year. Other provinces have set up red tape reduction panels or task forces. British Columbia has reduced 36 per cent of regulations in three years and reports annually. Of course, British Columbia is one of the jurisdictions that spends substantially less per capita than Alberta, so I think we could learn something from British Columbia in this regard, as far as how they reduce red tape and regulations and how that can actually save taxpayers money. The money, even if it's not saved,

can go to more productive things in government instead of being wasted on wasted regulation and bureaucracy.

Now, even a former federal NDP consumer affairs critic, Glenn Thibeault, said: looking at ways to eliminate unnecessary paperwork and save small companies time and money that they should devote to their business is a good idea. That's right from an NDP colleague of this government. We need to change the government culture to come up with solutions that don't involve more rules.

Of course, we have lots of opportunity here to do good work. This is our job, to come up and debate bills and come up with these things to make life better for Albertans. That's our job here. We don't need to keep these regulations in place that are not doing any benefit for Albertans. All they do is that they take time and they take money away from small business. Small businesses generate in the economy, and we should protect that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Oh, we're on private members' – you can tell it's Monday. I apologize again.

All right. Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to rise today to speak to Bill 207, Regulatory Burden Reduction Act. Our government is committed to working with businesses to make it easier for them to create jobs and get Albertans back to work. We know that Alberta businesses have a bigger economic impact than businesses anywhere in the country. Between January and August 2017 over 29,000 new businesses were incorporated in Alberta, a level that is 10.5 per cent higher than the same period in 2016. That's great progress. We've created tax credits that other provinces have enjoyed for decades, restored training programs for new entrepreneurs, and added an array of supports for established ones. We're helping businesses diversify and expand to new markets and increasing their access to capital. Albertans pay the lowest taxes in Canada, billions less than in Saskatchewan, and we recently cut the small-business tax by a third.

Madam Speaker, our government has made it clear that Alberta businesses have a bigger impact than businesses anywhere in the country. However, this bill will not improve Albertans' ability to do business or help protect the health and safety of Alberta families and workers, so I cannot support this bill.

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

As part of phase 1 of the agencies, boards, and commissions review we are amalgamating 11 agencies, boards, and commissions and dissolving 15 more, creating efficiencies and saving \$33 million over the next three years. We're already incorporating into our behaviour and practices as a government the spirit of the bill that's being proposed today without creating unnecessary burdens on the administration of government in the process.

As part of that review I mentioned earlier, we've created the single, nimble Alberta Innovates to ensure that our research and innovation system is much more quick to react to changing processes and procedures in the world of business and ensure that every research dollar is wisely invested. We understand the role businesses play in this province's long-term economic outlook while enhancing

Albertans' quality of life and making life more affordable for Alberta families and communities.

Madam Speaker, I fully understand, having been a small-business man all my business career, all my adult life, what the benefits are to ensuring on an ongoing basis that so-called red tape or government regulations are reviewed as part of the normal part of a government's administration. It's the responsibility of any government to do that on an ongoing basis, but to hamstring a government on an ongoing basis with a one-for-one type of requirement is in excess. It's something that would create problems and make it more difficult for government to operate and doesn't actually solve the problem you're trying to address.

4:20

We are committed as a government to working with businesses to make it easier for them to create jobs and get Albertans back to work, and I'm proud of the ongoing work our government has done to make sure that good jobs stay in Alberta. In fact, some of Canada's most respected business and economic experts are forecasting Alberta to lead the country in economic growth for the next two years. This summer RBC pegged GDP growth at 4.2 per cent this year, far higher than Alberta's average growth rate of 2.6 per cent, Madam Speaker, between 2005 and 2015. Their reports have cited Alberta's historic infrastructure build and the increased investor confidence that comes with pipeline approvals as contributing factors to our economic recovery. Albertans have no control over world oil prices, but strategic investments from government and industry have helped to cushion the blow and stimulate growth. There were over 70,000 more jobs in Alberta this summer than in summer 2016. Alberta also continues to have the highest employment rate in the country and the highest weekly earnings.

I'm very proud of the work the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade has done to ensure that businesses succeed. The CFIB presented our hon. minister and other trade ministers in the Canadian free trade agreement with the golden scissors award, which is presented to those involved in helping to eradicate red tape for Canada's small businesses. Madam Speaker, the process is already under way within the administration of our government, and Bill 207 is certainly not a necessity to prod that effort. As noted by the CFIB, the Canadian free trade agreement was a major step towards resolving often conflicting rules and regulations across the provinces. Thank you to the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade for having the backs of Albertan businesses and ensuring they have the best landscape to succeed.

Now, we know that regulations have an important role in protecting the health and safety of Alberta's families and workers. Regulations also help to ensure that businesses are competing on a level playing field and ensure that clients and customers are getting a fair deal. One-for-one rules are overly simplistic because the number of individual regulations doesn't correlate with the burden imposed by the regulations. One could easily create five new regulations that have minimal administrative costs or one new regulation that is extremely onerous to comply with.

This bill proposed by the hon. member also lacks the specifics needed for this type of change. For instance, if government creates a new environmental regulation, would this bill necessitate removal of another environmental regulation or a regulation from any other field? It's important to ask: what constitutes a new regulation that needs to be offset? Some regulations could be needed to include agency guidance and to help clarify earlier regulations or to assist businesses. Other regulations might include enforcement policies, interpretations, directives, memoranda, et cetera. Again, this bill lacks the specificity needed.

One-for-one rules also create more work for regulators and slow down bureaucracy, Madam Speaker, because trying to reduce the number of regulations will only make new regulations more dense and complex. In addition, having to identify regulations to eliminate and performing comparative CBAs for existing regulations versus the proposed new regulation are extremely time intensive. Let me reiterate that enforcing a one-for-one rule increases bureaucratic inefficiency and lag time because policy-makers must spend time identifying regulations to repeal and replace as well as drafting new policies.

One-for-one rules make it more difficult to co-ordinate our regulatory regime with that of other jurisdictions and therefore complicate trade for Alberta companies. For example, if an Alberta small or medium-sized enterprise wants to access another market within Canada or internationally, it will need to comply with foreign regulations before it can export. This is one reason why streamlining Alberta regulations with other jurisdictions simplifies this process for individual businesses. One-for-one rules also hamper the ability of public agencies to create regulations.

Let me be clear. Reducing regulations, whether they are environmental, financial, or otherwise, exposes the public and the environment to risk, and our government remains committed to mitigating public risks and having strong oversight systems in place. While we understand that regulations and bureaucracy may be frustrating at times, they exist to protect the public and the environment from unnecessary risk.

So, Madam Speaker, while I cannot support the bill, if the opposition has examples of existing regulations they believe should be removed, I know that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade would be happy to discuss them, and I'd be happy to hear from them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is imperative that we take a look at some sort of red tape reduction priority in this province, and that's the reason that I'm pleased today to stand up in the House and not only speak to but support Bill 207, the Regulatory Burden Reduction Act.

Alberta is the only province in Confederation that doesn't have a plan or a procedure to reduce red tape in our province. This is the only province that is so backwards and so far behind on this that we're willing to blow smoke and claim, "Oh, we're just going to do it privately," that it's too much work, that it costs too much energy. We're the only province that still has our head in the sand and doesn't believe that it's important that we take a close look at the regulatory burden that businesses have to endure in this province. Why are we so far behind in this? I really don't understand that.

We need to start with some sort of a basic principle of commitment, and we can do that by implementing this piece of legislation to restore the ability of our businesses to be competitive, to restore foreign investment, and, I also might say, to restore the innovation that has driven Alberta's economy, that has driven our prosperity, made families do well. But as long as we're going to say, "Oh, it doesn't matter" or that there's some aspect of this that takes too much work, it's like being a hoarder, quite frankly. If you don't want to clean out your house because it's too much work, then the regulations just pile up higher and deeper and higher and deeper till, finally, no one can even move in the house. We need to take a look at the competitiveness, the foreign investment benefits, and the innovative benefits that would come from reducing some of the regulation that,

quite frankly, is obsolete and redundant. That's the regulation that needs to be looked at.

Interestingly, British Columbia did this. They didn't decrease their taxes at all to attract business. All they did is to decrease their red tape burden by 43 per cent, and it doesn't seem to have hurt them in any way. They didn't find it too expensive or taking too much effort or that it somehow bound them as a government that they had to get rid of one when they put a new one in. They got rid of 43 per cent of their regulation, which is a severe cost to business, and that severe cost to business is what will limit our competitiveness, our investment, and our innovation. It's a substantial amount of money that goes to the administrative costs that both small, medium, and large business have to carry on top of the other burdens of an economic downturn and other things.

You know, running a business is hard. It takes a massive amount of work. All the business owners that I know spend probably twice as much time and effort at running their business, work late at night at home, back there first thing in the morning, in order to survive. They don't have a nice, cushy, safe 8-to-4 job and get a guaranteed pension and all that stuff. Running a small business is extremely hard. Do you know that the average small business – 50 per cent of small businesses will not survive their first five years. Fifty per cent of them will not survive the first five years.

Then you can go to the big businesses. I know that people across the aisle here think that big business is the evil monster, that somehow they're destroying everybody and sucking their blood and that they're unkind and everything else. But did you know that the biggest businesses in North America, the Standard & Poor's 500, on average will only survive 15 years? Company mortality is extremely high in North America, and part of the reason is the regulatory burden that they have to face.

Not only do they have to face economic changes and economic ups and downs, changes in markets, competitors, and all the rest; they have to deal with the weight of outdated and overregulation, that costs them immense amounts of money.

4:30

We've already heard that in Canada \$30 billion a year goes to basically complying with regulation, much of it obsolete, much of it outdated, much of it utterly ineffective in accomplishing any kind of good for the public. The numbers of hours and the employee contributions that have to go into paperwork and compliance and reporting and testing and all these different kinds of things: they all overlap.

These things are truly a burden upon business. I think we need to think of it as a bag of rocks, quite frankly. Every time you create an unnecessary burden, you put another rock in the bag that that business has to carry. Every step they want to take, they have to move that bag of rocks first. It's not in any way efficient. We are killing our businesses, which is killing the job opportunities, the employment opportunities by maintaining and keeping unnecessary regulation and by burdening businesses with these heavy weights, which in many cases are truly obsolete and redundant and do nothing to promote public safety in any way, shape, or form.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has been so clear in issuing their report card during Red Tape Awareness Week. This report card has graded the provinces and the territories on their commitment to red tape reduction. It looks at political leadership, public measurement, constraints on regulations, and guess what this province gets? Every year we get an F, a failure. We have completely failed in this. It's unbelievable. B.C. gets an A. Quebec gets an A. Alberta gets a complete failure on this. We are adding not just rocks but big stones to the burdens that businesses have to carry in order to try to survive. It's no wonder that the majority of small businesses fail

within five years and that even the big ones don't make it past 15 years on average.

Running a business is extremely hard. We should be making it easier for business. Business is what earns tax revenue for this province. Business is what provides jobs for people. Businesses are the ones that provide services and even charity donations and all the rest of it. If we continue to burden them with excessive amounts of obsolete and redundant regulation, they don't stay. They leave.

The member across brags about how many new businesses have been started this year. How many actually left, and how many of those new businesses were started because people lost their jobs due to the policies and regulations of this government? They don't have any employment, and they have no other choice but to try and create a new business. Then let's remember that more than half of them are going to fail within the next five years. People will have lost even more.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of the private member's bill to close debate, I would like to now invite the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner to close debate.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The goal of this bill was to give the government an opportunity to address the burden of red tape on our society. When business costs increase or are high, that cost is always passed on to the consumer – always – unless they leave the jurisdiction and go to another jurisdiction, which is equally devastating to our society.

Now, B.C.'s success, in which they were able to do a 36 per cent reduction in three years, should be reason enough to support this bill. Receiving an F from CFIB every year should be enough to support this bill. The fact that we are the only provincial jurisdiction in Canada that doesn't have a red tape reduction strategy should be reason enough to support this bill. The fact that red tape disproportionately hurts small businesses should be reason enough to support this bill. The fact that this government has no idea how many regulations are on the books, called the regulatory baseline, should be reason enough to support this bill. The fact that a majority of the members opposite have never signed the front of a cheque should be reason enough to support this bill. The fact that the jurisdictions to the south are reducing red tape and that this makes us uncompetitive should be reason enough to support this bill. [interjections]

According to the Conference Board of Canada we have lost . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, if we could please let the member close debate. Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: As I was saying, Madam Speaker, according to the Conference Board of Canada we have lost \$36 billion of investment in our province due to – and they state it – high regulation and regulations that this government has put on businesses.

Now, I had cited before, when I introduced this bill, Canada's Oil and Gas Sector at Risk? How Excessive Taxes and Regulations Undermine Our Competitiveness, by Germain Belzile. I just want to quote once again for the members to hear. She says:

As governments in Canada increase the regulatory burden and corporate taxes in the oil and gas sector, the U.S. government is moving in the opposite direction.

. . . Canadians should be aware that Canadian competitiveness is already being affected by measures that have been adopted, and could be affected even more if other reforms succeed [in the United States]. The relative equilibrium we've enjoyed with our southern neighbour will be thrown off kilter,

and will only be re-established if governments in Canada follow suit.

The problem, Madam Speaker, is that this government is going in the opposite direction of where we should be going. When we have a jurisdiction to the south of us that is lowering taxes, lowering regulatory burden, then we need to do the same in order for us to be able to compete with foreign investment. This is where this government seems to fail. They seem to fail in being able to understand that we are in global competition not just with other jurisdictions in Saskatchewan or in B.C. but that we actually compete globally with the United States, with Europe, with Asia especially, in order to be able to sell our products.

When B.C. decided that they were going to approach this issue, what they decided was that, yes, they could lower taxes. Instead, what they said was: we're going to try to just decrease regulatory burden. They did that, and they saw such success with GDP growth in their own province that they decided to keep on doing it year after year. When it was all said and done, they were able to decrease the regulations by over 43 per cent.

This is not asking to decrease regulation. This is actually just taking a baby step, which is to say a one-for-one rule. I heard members this afternoon. I heard the Member for Edmonton-McClung saying that we don't want to hamstring the government. The problem is that if you don't give yourself something to work towards, a goal to work towards, then you're not going to achieve anything. At least, we have the opportunity to be able to say: here's the problem; let's fix it.

I would implore all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of this bill. This is a good first step in being able to help our small businesses, especially, to get back to work.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:38 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	MacIntyre
Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Orr
Cooper	Hunter	Pitt
Drysdale	Loewen	Stier

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Phillips
Bilous	Jansen	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Ceci	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Connolly	Luff	Sabir
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Schreiner
Dach	McKitrick	Shepherd
Dang	McLean	Sucha
Drever	Miller	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Westhead
Gray	Payne	Woollard
Hinkley		

Totals: For – 12 Against – 40

[Motion for second reading of Bill 207 lost]

**Bill 208
Government Organization (Utilities Consumer
Advocate) Amendment Act, 2017**

The Speaker: The Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy today to introduce debate on second reading of Bill 208, the Government Organization (Utilities Consumer Advocate) Amendment Act, 2017.

Electricity in today's modern communities is a necessity, and consumers need to know that the government has their back when they are dealing with companies that distribute and market electricity. They cannot be left to fend for themselves on their own in a market where the terms and conditions of electricity contracts are often hard to understand. To protect those consumers and to provide them with the information they need to make informed and safe choices for their families, it is important to create an easily accessible information source that gives them the background they need. Providing electricity to their families is one of the most important choices that people can make. We need to ensure that we are doing everything we can to protect Albertans from undue and unanticipated costs.

I've had many conversations with people in my communities who have raised questions about electricity marketing and how their bills work. The fact is that there are many elements to electricity pricing, and we need to take as much guesswork out of the equation as possible. The bill will ensure that consumers have the information they need to make good deals in the energy marketplace.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, this bill will give the Utilities Consumer Advocate the authority to gather records such as complaints made under the Alberta Utilities Commission Act or the Electric Utilities Act and the outcome of any recommendations, hearings, or settlements; also investigations, orders, administrative penalties, or convictions conducted, awarded, or made under the Fair Trading Act, the Electric Utilities Act, or the Alberta Utilities Commission Act; also compliance records of a distributor, provider, or retailer in adhering to the standards and codes prescribed under the Electric Utilities Act, the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, and the Fair Trading Act; and any other matters that the Utilities Consumer Advocate considers necessary to carry out the purposes of this clause. It will also ask the UCA to make the information they gather public in an easily understandable format. This will help consumers when they go to purchase electricity contracts.

I've also had the opportunity to meet with the Utilities Consumer Advocate and hear about some of the fantastic work that that office does to help energy consumers in Alberta. This bill will enshrine the role of the Utilities Consumer Advocate in law so that the UCA can be there for Albertans for the future.

The Utilities Consumer Advocate is an important resource for Albertans. Every year they handle some 30,000 to 40,000 inquiries. They produce educational material and run outreach events across the province. They provide mediation services to consumers who cannot reach agreement with their utility providers, and often their intervention is enough to settle most disputes. They run a program every year reconnecting utilities for people who have had their services disconnected so that some of Alberta's most vulnerable do not suffer through a winter without heat or power. They conduct research and represent consumers at proceedings of the Alberta Utilities Commission. Since 2013 the UCA's intervention at commission hearings has helped save more than \$800 million on energy bills.

This is an important role, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud to be putting forward a bill that will allow this valuable office . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the time limit for consideration of this matter is concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Carbon Levy Impact on Seniors' Care

509. Mr. Gotfried moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly establish a special committee to assess the financial impact of the carbon levy on organizations that provide front-line care to seniors in Alberta, including but not limited to for-profit organizations, not-for-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, and government-owned and -operated facilities, and in conducting its review, the committee shall consult with key public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders and make recommendations for the mitigation of any impacts deemed a threat to the provision of front-line care.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my time as Seniors and Housing critic for the legacy PC caucus I had the opportunity to sit down with many care providers from all across Alberta. The one thing that continued to come up with them and with the seniors affected by it was the negative impact the carbon levy was having on organizations which provide front-line seniors' care. This motion is deliberately broad in nature, including for-profit, not-for-profit, faith-based, and government-owned and -operated facilities because it's not just one type of provider that is experiencing difficulties because of the carbon levy; quite frankly, it is all of them. These difficulties extend all across the spectrum of operators in Alberta.

Many seniors are on fixed incomes, whether that be government support, savings, family supplements, pensions, or some combination of the above. These fixed-income seniors who live in facilities which have the ability to raise rates to protect their ability to provide appropriate services along with operating and facility funds, life cycle maintenance, and in some cases, yes, a modest profit are concerned about the affordability of accommodations and services as well as their ability to remain self-reliant while enjoying life in their golden years.

Mr. Speaker, we all know seniors who have moved from their homes into some type of seniors' housing. These are the people who built Alberta into the place it is today. They're our parents, our grandparents, and soon it will be many of us. All they want is to be able to age in comfort with respect and dignity. Layering the additional costs of the carbon levy onto facilities which have the ability to raise rates irrespective of carbon rebates may price some seniors out of facilities that they are happy, welcome, and engaged in and in which they have become a part of those communities.

I think studying the impact the carbon levy has on these organizations, had had, and will have and the individuals affected by such increases driven by increases in operating costs for all facilities only strengthens what is a flagship policy of this government, whether I agree with it or not. Mr. Speaker, refusing to study something because you're afraid the results might not be all that flattering, sunshine and rainbows, is no way to govern.

Other accommodation, service, or care providers do not have the latitude to raise rents or fees to cover the impact of additional costs brought on by the carbon levy. They operate under a fixed-price environment. If they're able to raise their rates to cover the

increased costs, it means they have to cut somewhere in order to stay afloat. We have heard from such organizations that they're facing costs which could escalate into the hundreds of thousands of dollars and severely impact their ability to meet the needs and expectations of their residents and clients, senior Albertans who have given their blood, sweat, and tears and hard work in building our great province.

In a seniors' facility which cannot raise rates, the things which will suffer will be things like the food options and recreational activities they offer. Do you want to be the one who does not understand or appreciate the impact on their lives? Is it the fresh salad, fruit, or vegetables on Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Saturdays, the podiatrist or massage therapist on Wednesdays and Fridays, or the thermostat setting that leaves them chilled in the winter? Should you decide, or should we understand it and appreciate that impact, as this motion asks our government to do? These quality of life components should not have to suffer because of the carbon levy.

Not only has the carbon levy affected the ability of these organizations to provide the same quality of life for their residents; it is threatening the financial viability and sustainability of many for-profit, not-for-profit, and co-operative seniors' accommodations and care and service providers. I know that some members opposite have made public statements that they would like to see the government own and operate all facilities, but that is not the case today. Quite frankly, we need all the operators, including the government facilities, to be operating to meet the needs of our seniors. There needs to be robust consultation with the faith-based, nonprofit, and private-sector providers with respect to the sustainability of their facilities, operations, and services. The lives and dignity of our seniors depend on it.

As noted by the Ministry of Seniors, Alberta's senior population will almost double in the next 14 years, reaching approximately 920,000 by 2031. The baby boomers are about to explode the demand for seniors' housing and services, and it's important that we understand the consequences of our actions and policies on these growing demographics. We cannot afford to lose beds, facilities, programs, and professional services provided by these compassionate independent providers. These organizations do great work across Alberta. The vast majority of them provide high-quality care and work extremely hard to keep their residents and clients happy and to improve their quality of life. Mr. Speaker, I have seen that in action.

Mr. Speaker, the carbon levy is, again, increasing by 50 per cent on January 1. This will further increase the cost. That will mean that seniors' care, accommodation, and services will be under further pressure and, quite frankly, will be severely challenged to provide the same services that they'd been doing in a cost-effective manner. The minimum wage increases we have seen, which will escalate further in the years ahead, only compound the impact and challenges for many of these organizations. As legislators we need to be fully cognizant and be willing to be transparent with respect to the unintended consequences the carbon levy is having on front-line seniors' care. It is our responsibility to these vulnerable Albertans, and we all need to be concerned about their care, housing, and well-being and to help them thrive in their golden years.

It is absolutely having an impact on the financial health and quality of life for our seniors, who by 2031 will represent fully 25 per cent of the population. Do they deserve your attention, concern, and compassion? I would argue that they do. I know that the members opposite often accuse us of using the carbon levy as a bogeyman, but that is just not the case. Every policy put forward by the government has an effect [interjections] – laugh at the seniors if you will – intended or unintended. In fact, we consulted broadly on

this issue over the past year. We have communicated with the Alberta Seniors Communities and Housing Association, ASCHA, some of their members and residents of their facilities, and know that they have passed a resolution hoping that the impact of the carbon levy on housing operations would be reviewed and addressed. In fact, I am certain that housing and services providers would be happy to roll up their sleeves and work with all key parties collaboratively in a nonadversarial manner to ensure that front-line services are not impacted for their guests, their residents, their clients.

Additionally, the Alberta Continuing Care Association, which represents over 14,000 residents in supportive living and long-term care, has brought the issue of the carbon tax implications for congregate living care providers to my attention and fully supports this motion, which brings me back to one of my previous points. We as legislators and representatives of our communities need to be able to take the time and look at how the things we do in this House affect everyday, normal, hard-working Albertans, particularly those seniors that built this province. We need to ensure that the legislation and policies implemented in this House improve the lives of Albertans and allow them to thrive and live a dignified life and not make it more difficult for them to do so. I do not see the harm nor any risk to anyone other than Alberta seniors if we don't do so in taking the time to look further into this issue and the impact.

It is clearly an issue for a wide variety of front-line care providers across Alberta, and arming the government with additional information can only serve to improve a policy which affects every single Albertan in some way, shape, or form, indeed, the seniors we respect, love, care for, and owe so much to. It is for these reasons that I would encourage all members of the Assembly to think about the seniors in their lives, to think about the seniors in their community, to think about the seniors of the future, that doubling of the number of seniors, 25 per cent of this province's population. I would encourage you to think about them when you're voting and to vote for this motion.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek for his passionate defence, and I really want to thank you for your passionate caring for seniors and your emphasis that we need to be nice to our seniors. That's why I am on the government's side, because our government has invested so much in seniors. That is why we started building more long-term care. That is why we invested in the infrastructure budget. I am thinking that you are very much supportive of the efforts of the government and in investing in the seniors projects that we are doing such as in my own riding and in Calgary and so on.

5:10

I'm not going to be supporting this motion for a number of reasons. First of all, our government is providing services that families and seniors need. I want to emphasize time and again that our government has made a priority of ensuring that we have the funds to support seniors and families and that we are not planning to do any cuts, as the members of the opposition randomly tweet about.

I also think that this motion distracts from the government's goals of carefully reducing the deficit while strengthening Albertans' priorities in health care, education, and seniors' care. As a senior I am very well aware of the needs of seniors and the investment that our government has already made around seniors. We have also taken action to protect and support jobs, build new roads and

hospitals, support the energy industry by securing approval of new pipelines, and build more long-term care units, assisted living, and now facilities like the affordable housing that seniors need.

Our government is making life more affordable for seniors. At the moment a quarter of a million Albertan seniors are eligible for a maximum of \$300 annually from the carbon levy rebate, Mr. Speaker. That's almost half of the seniors in the province. I know, having talked to a lot of seniors who have available health care and receive health benefits and receive dental care and so on. This is an important program that provides the monthly income supplement to federal income sources for seniors. I am proud that we maintain this commitment through challenging economic times, and I plan on making sure that we are committed to continuing, to maintaining support for our seniors rather than the 20 per cent cutback which the opposition, the UCP, keeps talking about.

Our government also supports seniors by protecting more than \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years. I am sure you've talked to a lot of seniors who have available health care and receive health benefits and receive dental care and so on. This is an important program that provides the monthly income supplement to federal income sources for seniors. I am proud that we maintain this commitment through challenging economic times, and I plan on making sure that we are committed to continuing, to maintaining support for our seniors rather than the 20 per cent cutback which the opposition, the UCP, keeps talking about.

Mr. Speaker, our government knows that every Albertan has the right to access safe and stable housing, and that's why we have built almost 3,000 new homes for seniors in Alberta. We also know that by building new homes in Alberta, we've also provided jobs for a lot of Albertans. We're also helping seniors around low-income equity loans, and a lot of the seniors have been using their loans to become more energy efficient.

Mr. Speaker, I kind of wanted to talk about those nonprofit and for-profit organizations which the previous speaker has spoken about. Having talked to a lot of these organizations, one of the things that always interests me is that these organizations are interested in becoming energy efficient and in using renewable energy and in upgrading the facilities to be more energy efficient. I'm really hoping that the previous speaker . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, come on.

Ms McKittrick: . . . has made sure the agencies in his own riding have access to the government grants to support them to do that. One of the purposes of the carbon levy is to make sure that those organizations have the opportunity to reduce their energy needs and reduce their monthly outlay in energy costs. You know, a lot of seniors are very interested in that issue. I have a sustainability committee in my own riding, and I would say that three-quarters of the members of this committee are seniors because they know that the investment in the carbon levy and the investment in energy efficiency is not only good for them, but it's good for their grandchildren, and . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, hon. members.

Ms McKittrick: . . . it's good for all of Alberta.

I also think that we have to really believe that these organizations that take care of seniors are themselves invested in reducing their energy. In September there was a conference in Calgary, 400 nonprofit organizations whose purpose is to be more energy efficient and to ensure that the nonprofit sector becomes more energy efficient. I think it's disingenuous of the opposition not to pay attention to the fact that the same people who provide care for our seniors are also themselves invested in energy-efficient use and in reducing their carbon footprint.

Mr. Speaker, two years ago, when the economy was in free fall, we refused to make a bad situation worse by making cuts to services that families count on. Instead, we got down to work to help Albertans weather the storm. This means that we're not only maintaining existing provincially owned facilities but we are building new facilities to support the communities who need housing the most. One of the really great things when we're building new facilities is that we're making them more energy efficient.

Our government has never wavered, also, in their commitment to protecting public health care. I am so proud that we have not just maintained but we have increased funding for home and community care, bringing the total to more than \$2 billion. This funding will give seniors and Albertans with disabilities services such as nursing and personal assistance, day programs, respite care, palliative care, and wound care so that they can continue to live at home and participate in their communities. Now, we know that things were not always easy for Albertans over the last few years, but one of the things that we've done as a government is to support seniors and low-income Albertans, and we have committed to that. We've also committed to supporting families.

One of the things I think we really need to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is how, unfortunately, the opposition has been spreading misinformation and blatant falsehoods about the carbon levy and the contrived 75 per cent hike to home heating bills, all to incite a climate of fear and confusion. I end up spending so much time on Facebook and Twitter having to counteract and give facts to people. [interjections] That's really what disturbs me the most about this . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Ms McKittrick: . . . fear for seniors that this motion is calling for. I think we have to be honest and say facts and not put out so much misinformation.

As we also have seen – and one of the things that I'm really starting to find so frustrating as an Albertan is how often the opposition wants us to fail. Every single time it's always negative. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Ms McKittrick: Why don't we be positive sometimes? Why don't we think about what's happening around the carbon levy . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, if you'd direct your comments through the Speaker, it would be appreciated. Thank you.

Ms McKittrick: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm feeling very energized about this issue because I really don't like to have to spend so much time every single day on Facebook and on Twitter trying to say the truth to people, okay?

I think it's really good for us to kind of remind ourselves about some of the true facts. For example, current gas prices are so low that Albertans are paying less than they have in over a generation. As I've travelled all over Canada, our gas is one of the lowest throughout Canada. At its peak Albertans were paying between \$140 and \$160 a month to heat their homes and run their businesses.

Often, with my constituents, I spend a lot of time reminding them that they have options as to who they can use for providers of their gas and electricity. The average household is paying less than \$100, and that is not to mention the rebates we are giving to low- and middle-income families and our seniors. As I mentioned before – and I think it's good – so that everybody is reminded, low-income seniors in Alberta are eligible for a \$300 carbon levy rebate. I would

like to take the opportunity to remind all seniors to make sure that they fill out their income tax in January so that they can be eligible for a rebate. This goes for families, too.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Motion 509. The actions behind this motion have been needed for the past year. Yes, it's been a year. This NDP's job-killing, non social licensing carbon tax – and I will not call it a levy; let's put it on the record – has created the need for me to rise and for my hon. colleague for Calgary-Fish Creek to introduce this motion. Motion 509 calls for this Assembly to study the financial impact of the carbon tax on seniors' care in Alberta. If this is a godsent carbon tax, why are we afraid of doing an impact study on it? What are we trying to hide from the seniors, the seniors who have built this province, who have done so much? Why are we trying to hide from them what this government is taking away from them?

5:20

I also ask this Chamber to launch a thorough and comprehensive consultation with the public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders; in other words, every single organization and business that is involved in seniors' care. We know that the NDP's poorly-thought-out and unnecessary carbon tax hurts seniors and everybody else living in this province. It hurts them at every level. My colleague the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek became concerned about the impact of this tax on the accommodations and services offered to seniors when he was the critic for Seniors and Housing. Since then, I have taken over the role, and I plan to continue his crusade to have a proper and fulsome discussion about how this carbon tax affects seniors' care. This is step one.

It must be disappointing to Albertans who voted for this accidental government, Mr. Speaker, to learn of the NDP's lack of concern for seniors. It must be disappointing for them. They talk it up fine, buying headlines every single day, front-line this, front-line that, but in the end there's no concern for caring for Alberta's vulnerable citizen. It's like – I'm trying to remember the saying – it's an all hat but no cattle kind of thing, right? It's all talk but no care. We all know that seniors are among those citizens – you would think an NDP government would put their care as a top priority because they claim to be champions. Instead, they are targeted like everyone else when it comes to this indiscriminate carbon tax. Again, not a levy, a tax.

It is a warning to all Albertans, for all of us will become seniors. One day we're all going to become seniors. Some are going to become sooner than later, but we're all going to become seniors. For many of us our parents are already there or on the verge of becoming seniors. We can't escape that. It should be a quieter time, a time to reflect, not a time to worry daily about paying bills, not a time to worry: what will become of me if the carbon tax forces an increase in my price of accommodation? It's cruel to even consider the consequences. To be in a position to do something about it and to not do anything but increase the price for the sake of an unnecessary tax is crazy.

My colleague's motion is a common-sense one. Common sense, as we know, is not the NDP's strong suit, but we continue to hope that they may see value in it one day. This motion asks for an economic impact study. That should have happened before imposing the tax, like all the other bills, Bill 6. We can talk about those things that the government claims they have done consultation on but haven't, but since they didn't, it doesn't mean we brush it off now. [interjections] The members on the other side

think it's funny. It's not actually funny, and we should not be laughing at seniors who are going to be impacted by the increase in this tax. This is not funny, actually.

Why not do the study? What are we trying to hide from the seniors who have built this province? Why not meet with the organizations and businesses that provide services to the seniors, who understand how this year-old tax is affecting our older citizen in a very real way? Why not find out if changes to the tax, such as exemptions for certain sectors, make sense? There are always common-sense ways of mitigating the impact of government policies. Wouldn't the government want to know what these policies are? Why are we not doing that?

If this government claims that we have Albertans' backs, let's show Albertans that we actually do have their backs. We're not saying to stop or start anything. Let's do an impact study. That's all that this motion is about. Let the professionals do the impact study, and let's improve seniors' lives. That's all we're saying. But the government is not willing to do that. There must be a reason why they're not supporting this motion. There must be a reason why they don't want to share the information with seniors and Albertans. I don't understand why. Perhaps these changes, these policies would be easy to implement. Perhaps they'll make sense. But we'll only find out when we do this economic impact study of it.

This motion, Motion 509, from my hon. colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek is especially crucial now, with the tax slated to increase at the end of this year. That's only a month away. Actually, 34 days, 35 days, Mr. Speaker. The UCP has promised Albertans that, yes, we will repeal this tax, and that will happen. [interjections] Don't laugh. That will happen. I'm telling you.

But in the interim it continues to exist. You would think that an NDP government who claims to care about people would vote in favour of this motion. Again, they don't want to do it because maybe they're trying to hide something from seniors. What do they have to lose? Apparently, these days – you have all seen the polls in the newspaper – they have very little to lose, actually, right? They don't have much to lose. We've all seen the polls.

Still, let's stick to the motion. At the very least I'm asking the government: let's pretend that they actually care about seniors. Let's pretend. They pretend when they buy the news headlines. Let's pretend, by supporting this motion, that they actually care about Albertans and they care about seniors. But they don't want to do it. For these citizens it could be suffering as a result of this poorly-thought-out tax. Again, not a levy, a tax.

If they don't do this consultation, this NDP government will never know the truth. Or maybe they do know the truth, and they don't want to share it with seniors and Albertans. Is that the reason? Is that the reason? I don't know why members aren't laughing about this now. You must know the truth, but you're afraid to share it with Albertans. If you have nothing to hide, let's support this motion, and let's do the economic impact study. That's all we're asking. But perhaps their plan in making policy and actually denying it: they don't want to accept that it's actually hurting people, because it is. It is hurting. That's why they're just, like, busy buying headlines. That's why they're denying the fact that, you know, this carbon tax is impacting people in a negative way. That's why they're trying to hide the truth from . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

5:30

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to the motion before the House. It's interesting, having listened to the most recent speaker from the

Official Opposition, who spoke very eloquently about the entitlement that he thinks the members of the Conservative Party still have to govern this province. He predicted an election outcome which was one where he believed forcefully that his party would win the election. Well, we don't deign on this side of the House to predict what Albertans will do. We certainly do everything we can every day to earn the right to govern once again.

Mr. Malkinson: That's leadership right there.

Mr. Dach: You better believe it.

As far as assuming what direction this province will go in in 2019, we believe strongly that we are going in the right direction, that we're on the right track, that putting a price on carbon is a forward-looking policy. Not doing so, allowing the federal government to set that policy for us, is a rear-view mirror attitude. That's exactly the type of attitude that the members opposite express time and time again, driving looking in the rear-view mirror. To be able to go back in time, as their leader has said that he'd prefer to do – if he could have any power that he wanted, he would choose to go back in time.

Well, I'll tell you what. We're not going back in time; we're moving forward in this province. We protected the seniors' benefits so that seniors have up to \$280 a month when they really need it. Jason Kenney's Conservatives would cut the seniors' benefit, making life harder for low-income seniors. We are strengthening the public services that seniors count on, like health care. They would make extreme cuts to health care and other front-line services, going back in time. We're working to make life better for everyday families. They want to give big tax giveaways to those . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. member, I wonder if you could direct your comments just a little to the left.

Mr. Dach: Our government works hard to protect the public services that families count on. Our priority is investing for the future, not forming committees.

As you have heard previous speakers talk about, in addition to all sorts of investments that we are going to be making as a result of being able to have a carbon levy at our disposal, we've invested \$88 million in much-needed repairs to fix furnaces, windows, and roofs for Albertans living in affordable housing. We're investing in new projects like the Sakaw lodge in Edmonton, Bow River lodge in Canmore, and Gilchrist Gardens phase 2 in Calgary.

For home care, we've increased funding for home and community care, bringing the total to more than \$2 billion. This funding will give seniors and Albertans with disabilities services such as nursing and personal assistants, day programs, respite relief, palliative care, and wound care so they can continue to live at home and participate in their communities. That's what a carbon levy gets you, Mr. Speaker.

Long-term care. We're committed to building 2,000 long-term care and dementia spaces, and we're on track. In the first quarter of this year we opened 388 continuing care beds. Ask our seniors in this province if they like those kinds of statistics, Mr. Speaker.

We are making life better and more affordable for seniors through the carbon levy rebate and, as I said, investing \$88 million for housing riders for upgrading furnaces and windows. All the opposition is focused on is cuts proposed by their leader that would make life harder for seniors. A 20 per cent cut would mean as many as 30,000 seniors losing their benefits and 25,000 Albertans losing their housing supports.

We continue to work for seniors, not against them, by protecting more than \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years,

investing in almost 3,000 new homes for seniors in Alberta, and providing access to low-interest home equity loans. We appointed a new Seniors Advocate to bring seniors' concerns directly to government, to continue working with seniors to make their lives better.

Now, I could go on at length, but I will talk a bit more about the reference to front-line seniors' care that seniors are receiving in Alberta. I'm proud of our government record that we continue to protect supports and services for seniors across the province; not only that, but we are making life more affordable for seniors. Approximately 260,000 Alberta seniors are eligible to receive a maximum of \$300 annually from the carbon levy rebate. Mr. Speaker, that's almost half of all seniors in the province.

The conclusion that I wanted to come to is to know that in the last few years we understand in this province that it's not been easy for people. Our plan, however, is working. Alberta is moving forward, and things are looking up. Supports for seniors and low-income Albertans are stronger. We're protecting the services that families count on, and this will continue, Mr. Speaker, to be our focus.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks we have seen the opposition spreading incorrect information about the carbon levy and a contrived 75 per cent hike to home heating bills, which bears no resemblance to reality, all to incite a climate of fear and confusion, which is really unfortunate, especially when we're dealing with seniors, who really want to know what the actual numbers are. We know they would cut the benefit for Alberta seniors, making life harder for hundreds of low-income seniors. They would make extreme cuts to health care and other front-line services, putting many vulnerable Albertans at risk. These reckless cuts to health and education will hurt Alberta's economic recovery and do real damage to Albertans.

The direction this government is going in is one that is protecting seniors and their health care and their housing, and the carbon levy that we have implemented is helping us do that. We are looking forward and putting a price on carbon, and the opposition wants to drive looking in the rear-view mirror, and they'll put that blue truck in the ditch every time.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured to rise tonight to speak on Motion 509, which was put forward by my colleague for Calgary-Fish Creek. I just wanted to clear something up about the carbon levy, tax. The fact that it's called a levy also means that the federal government can tax that tax. I just don't understand in anybody's world how that helps out Albertans. Just to be clear, that's \$3 billion that goes from this province to the federal government because this government chose to call it a levy instead of the tax that it actually is, just to get the math straight there for a second.

We have continually seen that this government lacks forethought with rushed legislation, and the rule for the last few years under the leadership of this government is to legislate first and consult second. One of the prime examples, of course, is what we're talking about right now, which is the carbon tax. Maybe the government hasn't figured it out, but it is contentious, it is unpopular, the government did not campaign on this, and it takes money out of the pockets of every single Albertan, including seniors. The province has failed at social licence because they're buying it with our tax dollars, and there has to be buy-in from people in order for that to work.

When it was introduced last year, the members on this side of the House fought extensively to the bitter end to advocate for Albertans

to ensure that their interests were represented. We begged the government to reconsider and to do the economic impact study, Mr. Speaker. We would really, really like to understand the real-world impacts. That's actually all that we're asking for. There's a lot of rhetoric that's going on. We're actually just looking to have the numbers and the metrics. Actually, during the debate over the carbon tax in the first place it was one of the main things that we asked for: within a year show us the metrics, show us the changes, and show us how the footprint has been altered.

We also pointed to other jurisdictions across the world, Mr. Speaker, to see that the carbon taxes that have been put in place have been reversed because the legislation proved to be ineffective in actually changing consumer behaviours, which I believe is actually the whole reason for having a carbon tax in the first place.

We also pointed out that in rural Alberta there's not always the ability to take public transit, which was one of the things that I believe the Premier pointed out, to just go take the bus. Well, for some of the seniors in some of the areas that I happen to represent, I have a feeling that that might be a bit difficult, so I think a different solution might be necessary. Again, the consumer needs to buy in. That does not make life better for seniors.

We have pointed to the fact that there would be a tax on every consumer good since Alberta is landlocked. Guess what? We rely on trucks and rail to ship goods and services. Yes, we do. And because of the rising cost of fuel and because of the carbon tax, it will now be substantially more expensive to move those goods and services to Alberta. That impacts our seniors, especially because a good chunk of them are on fixed incomes.

We pointed to the fact that this was a backdoor PST, and at a time of recession and struggle it was crippling to add these further expenses to the bills of Albertans that are already struggling to balance their chequebooks around their kitchen tables. Unfortunately, even though there were cries of exasperation and desperation, they fell on the deaf ears of this government.

5:40

One group in particular that we're talking about, the seniors, are amazing Albertans who built this province, who should now be enjoying their well-deserved retirement, Albertans who are largely on fixed incomes and may not be capable of earning more money to offset the costs of the carbon tax and who may not be even capable of changing the consumer habits that they have. Many seniors in Alberta are already taking the bus, and they also live in eco-friendly group housing, but they are vulnerable and on fixed incomes. Those who are not able to make further changes to their lifestyles: we're just going to penalize those folks so that they have less of a carbon footprint, that the government is refusing to show metrics on to show that it actually is working?

What about the fact that there's no – so we're going to invest in green technology but not in the seniors. There are long-reaching implications caused by this. Our offices, my office anyway, were inundated with letters and e-mails and calls from seniors and seniors' advocates, stakeholders, care providers, who – again, I'm not really sure how they're supposed to take the bus in rural areas. I would like to know how that's supposed to happen.

It became so clear to Albertans that seniors were targeted unfairly by this tax, and despite their best efforts the care facilities at some point are going to have to face those rising costs, which will be downloaded onto their residents on a fixed income or the families and loved ones and caregivers that are taking care of those people. This caused an enormous amount of stress for seniors, who may already be depending on other people to help them be where they are. Their families and the administration personnel for seniors' care facilities asked the government to consider an exemption for

seniors, and guess what? They were denied. For anybody who is a worker, who helps out with these people: are they supposed to drive us?

Oh, actually, speaking of that, I'd like to go over some of the commentary that was put forward about the carbon tax with regard to how you can reduce your carbon emissions. One of those was to drive less. Okay. I'd like to know how our front-line providers are supposed to drive less when we actually need them in the places where our seniors need them. What was another? Oh, fly less. So seniors who have spent their lives working are not supposed to now travel in their senior lives and visit their families? You tell them, especially people who are grandparents, to not go visit their families overseas. Ride-share: Uber doesn't exist in rural areas, Mr. Speaker. The other one that I loved that also came from the Premier is to just go buy an electric vehicle. Well, I'm sure that seniors, based on their carbon tax rebate, will be able to afford that, not to mention the front-line workers who are already putting everything they can into making sure that our seniors are protected.

Unfortunately, the government doesn't value the service that is given and chose to hike taxes on every aspect of seniors' care through the carbon tax.

One of the other things that I loved reading about from the government was that it's only \$13.25 a month. Well, on a fixed income, with expenses increasing everywhere else – this isn't the only thing that they pay for, Mr. Speaker – this is more than just a few cups of coffee, and that does not make life more affordable for seniors.

The carbon tax makes it more expensive, in fact, to transport seniors, to make the food that facilities purchase to feed their residents due to the rising trucking fuel costs that are downloaded onto the consumer. How does that make life better for Albertans and especially our seniors, Mr. Speaker? It's more expensive to heat these care facilities. What's happening with that? That's going to get downloaded onto the seniors, the families, and everybody else who is helping them.

In the state of this current economy the seniors' care facilities are struggling, just like every other Albertan right now. The government cannot be this naive to think that they could put in place a tax – again, it's called a levy so that they can tax the tax so that our friends in Ottawa are receiving \$3 billion in extra money that could have actually gone to helping our seniors into their pockets and actually everybody else's, including the caregivers and families who take care of these precious people.

The businesses are now going to have to absorb these costs, and they're going to price that out to their consumers. What does the government think about the fact that there are now seniors and families across the province struggling to pay these ballooning seniors' care facility fees? How is that going to be managed? We understand that dollars have been put into beds and all of those other kinds of things. Those are part of the equation, but we're talking about what is actually going out of seniors' pockets.

Mr. Gill: Let's do a study. We'll find out.

Mrs. Aheer: I agree. If we do a study, then everything the government is saying should be true. It should be true. Prove the equation.

Motion 509 seeks to remedy some of the damage already done by this government to our seniors and the front-line services by calling for a financial impact study. This should be an absolute necessity in any bill, especially a money bill, to prove that those dollars are actually doing what they're supposed to do, which was to influence consumer changes in behaviour, in what they're doing, and also to reduce the carbon footprint, none of which is expressly

put forward in any of the regulations, nor is it being shown in any of the vulnerable groups that we are talking about with an impact study; specifically, seniors, people on any sort of fixed income like AISH or anything else like that.

This is a common-sense solution. If this is truly about making things better for Albertans, then show us. It should be easy. In fact, I would think the government would be jumping up and down, happy to show what they're doing and to expose that we're asking for something that is wrong. Please prove us wrong. We'd love that.

I think that one of the things we have to consider prior to implementing a tax like this and what we were hoping for, given the fact that the carbon tax is going to be going up in 2018, is that the government would understand that not only is this expensive for the average person but for our front-line services and seniors. This government will now not take any time to heed the warnings of the opposition and support this motion.

Cortes-Vargas: Mr. Speaker, I'm just standing to seek unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to stand and speak to Motion 509, and I thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing it forward. You know, I really like the Member for Calgary-Fish-Creek. He's a swell guy. We share a lot of similar interests. We really have an affinity for Southeast Asia. We've talked about it many times.

Connolly: Facial hair, balding.

Mr. Coolahan: Whoa. I resemble that remark.

Anyway, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I find that this motion is not as genuine as he wants it to be. It's more of I'll call it a trial balloon, if you will, and it's done to, you know, incite the rage machine and the climate deniers inside and outside of their caucus.

I have many, many seniors' facilities in Calgary's greatest riding, Calgary-Klein, and I visit often. After they've thanked me for the muffins or the cookies, they don't talk about the carbon levy – and we talk about it – as a burden. They don't talk about it as a burden. You know what they thank me for? They thank me for the new windows they just got installed. That's what they thank me for. They thank me for the new furnace that was installed. You know what else they thank us for? They thank me for the carbon levy rebate that they receive.

You know, this government has put a great deal of focus on ensuring that seniors are healthy and that they have good facilities to live in. I think the opposition is ignoring the fact that the infrastructure deficit was massive in these facilities, which is why we had to put all this money back into them, and I'm very happy that we're doing it. You know what else the seniors that I speak to in my riding do? They understand that it was an issue over the 30 years, facilities just deteriorating. We're picking up the pieces, and it's not easy. One of the ways to do that is through the carbon levy.

You know, we continue to work for seniors and not against them, Mr. Speaker: \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years – \$800 million – investing in almost 3,000 new homes for seniors in Alberta, and providing access to low-interest and home equity loans. Not only that, but we're making life more affordable for seniors. Approximately 260,000 Alberta seniors are eligible for the annual rebate from the carbon levy. That's almost half the seniors in this province. That's why we continue to build seniors'

housing projects. Currently we're seeing almost 3,000 new homes for seniors in Alberta. Three thousand.

5:50

You know, the sad reality of this whole situation, with a lot of what the opposition puts forward and this motion, is that 99 per cent of what the opposition puts forward is very difficult to take seriously. Between the climate denying, the Rebel media appearances, the fake memes with fake numbers on them, I mean, it's really hard to take anything they put forward seriously because we're not sure if they're actually doing something with a genuine interest or just, again, to poke at the rage machine. Who knows? Does the opposition understand that for the provinces that don't have a climate leadership plan in place next year, it's going to be imposed on them? Really, do they not want a made-in-Alberta solution to this, something that we need to do?

Mr. Carson: They prefer Ottawa-imported, like their leader.

Mr. Coolahan: Ottawa-imported, like their leader.

But it's okay because they do have a plan for that. They're going to get rid of the Alberta climate leadership plan, they're going to take the imported, and then they're just going to sue the federal government. That always works. That's always a solid plan. Always a solid plan.

You know, when the opposition plays games and they mislead the public on many of these things and they make false statements, what they're doing is that they're rooting for Alberta to fail.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Coolahan: It is shameful.

You know, Mr. Kenney opposes absolutely everything we do. We know that they would cut Alberta seniors' benefits. They would make extreme cuts to health care and other front-line services. They'd put many vulnerable Albertans at risk, and their reckless cuts to health care and education will hurt Alberta's economic recovery and do real damage to Albertans. As my esteemed colleague from Edmonton-McClung said, it's rear-view thinking. I like that term. It's good. We're moving the province forward, absolutely, and in doing that, we're making sure that people don't get left behind – that's the important piece – including seniors. The cost of doing nothing for many years with these facilities was astronomical. This is why we're having to play catch-up, and it's shameful that that happened for so long.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to end it there. I'm going to say that I won't be supporting the motion, but thank you for bringing it forward.

The Speaker: I'll call on the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to close debate.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start by saying that I am profoundly disappointed. I've worked hard for the past two and a half years to understand and appreciate the seniors-care ecosystem with diligence, spending nights in facilities and talking to seniors, so shame on the members opposite for not taking that time to understand the significant challenges being faced by seniors and seniors' service providers. Shame on them for being willing to blindly throw Alberta seniors under the bus, for blindly supporting a policy whose impact they do not even want to measure. As the saying goes, if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. But perhaps the lack of management acumen on the other side or ability to balance a budget should not surprise me. I have 10.3 billion reasons that prove my point.

My motion quite plainly and simply asks for us to better measure and understand “the financial impact of the carbon levy on organizations that provide front-line care to seniors in Alberta” and to mitigate “any impacts deemed a threat to the provision of front-line care.” Front-line cuts, indeed.

I’m disappointed that the members opposite are afraid that the study may yield results that could negatively reflect on the unintended consequences of their policies. Whether they agree with my assertions and that of my party and the majority of Albertans of the damage caused by the carbon tax, they are misguided in rejecting this motion, an opportunity to do the right thing by Alberta seniors, Mr. Speaker. Or are they more concerned about the impact on their personal standing with respect to their partisan futures? Let Albertans answer that question in the future. On the contrary, I believe that supporting this motion would actually enhance their political capital. But I guess they can face that music and Alberta seniors at the polls if they truly cannot see their way to protecting these same seniors and their well-being today and into the future.

I’m disappointed that they would even consider putting their own self-interest ahead of that of our seniors, Mr. Speaker, and I’m disappointed that we have a government who is afraid of measuring impact, doing the right thing, and taking the time to ensure that their policies are as strong as they can be and that the impact, positive or negative, and unintended consequences are understood and quantified. That is what good government looks like and acts like in the protection of vulnerable Albertans.

We have seen numerous government policies result in unintended consequences, to the detriment of making life better or more affordable for Albertans. This motion could have allowed for representatives from this House to come together, putting our differences aside for Alberta seniors, to see how we can work to ensure that the carbon tax does not and will not have a negative impact on the lives, health, and well-being of our seniors. Is that too much to ask, Mr. Speaker? Having this additional information on hand would have provided the government with valuable data as they move full speed ahead, albeit irresponsibly, in my mind, with a 50 per cent increase in the carbon tax.

Like it or not, we have a carbon tax until at least 2019. But refusing to study the impact that this policy is having on our seniors is not only profoundly disappointing but disturbing in its callousness toward the plight of our seniors, who deserve not only better but the best we can deliver in terms of affordability and sustainability with respect to housing, care, nutrition, and essential services. If this government is so afraid of studying the impact that one of their flagship policies is having on a population with a limited ability to pay for the increased cost of living it is impacting, they must already know in their hearts and intuitively in their minds the damage the carbon levy is having every single day on fixed-income seniors in this province. Failure to measure, failure to manage, indeed.

I know that many members opposite have convinced themselves that supporting the carbon tax somehow grants them moral high ground from which they can look down on the majority of Albertans who do not support this tax, but it clearly does not. It means that they would rather feel good about themselves than take the

opportunity to measure and manage, in this case damaging and harming vulnerable seniors. The carbon tax is having real impacts on seniors across Alberta every single day, and refusing to study that impact despite numerous calls, in my mind, is irresponsible.

Tomorrow morning, Mr. Speaker, is the Alberta Continuing Care Association’s MLA breakfast, and I hope to see you all there. I hope that everyone who votes against this motion comes prepared tomorrow to explain why they voted against the motion, which the caring, compassionate, and community-spirited members of this association are supportive of.

Mr. Speaker, seeking information and supporting stakeholders and caring for and about seniors is something we should all have as a priority. Clearly, that is not the case with respect to this motion, and I’m saddened by that on behalf of all Alberta seniors.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I’m deeply disappointed that an ideological partisan dogma could not be put aside today in support of our Alberta seniors to ensure that their lives are as rich and as respected as we possibly can. There’s an incredible group of service providers, care providers we are blessed to have delivering compassionate care in our province. We should respect them and honour them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 509 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Orr
Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Pitt
Drysdale	Hunter	Stier

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Payne
Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Jansen	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Connolly	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Luff	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dach	Mason	Shepherd
Dang	McKittrick	Sucha
Drever	Miller	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Westhead
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 36
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 509 lost]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:04 p.m.]

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