



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 28, 2017

Day 57

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (Ind)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (NDP)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)

Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (NDP)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
Official Opposition Whip
McKitrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (NDP)
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (AP)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
Leader of the Official Opposition,
Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Calgary-Lougheed

Party standings:

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

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel		Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	McPherson
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Schreiner
Gill	Taylor
Gotfried	

Select Special Auditor General Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cyr	Littlewood
Gill	van Dijken
Horne	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Aheer	Miller
Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Shepherd
Horne	Swann
Jansen	Vacant
Luff	Yao
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Drever	Nixon
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinstauber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	Nixon
Dang	Orr
Jabbour	Piquette
Luff	Schreiner
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinstauber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Fildebrandt	Miller
Fraser	Panda
Goehring	Renaud
Gotfried	Turner
Littlewood	Westhead
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hunter

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	MacIntyre
Dang	Malkinson
Drysdale	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 28, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of very bright young students from Beacon Heights school in my constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Meryl Roberts, along with one of their chaperones Emily Robertson. I must say that I had an opportunity during Read In Week to go and talk to this class. I speak to Ms Roberts' class every year, and I can tell you that she's got a very bright young group of students this year that are very interested in learning all about our democratic system. So they've spent the day here at the Legislature and are looking forward to question period. I'd ask them to rise and please 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 distinct pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly what I argue are the most beautiful and some of the smartest students in the entire province, 35 students from Dr. Lila Fahlman school seated in the public gallery today. They are accompanied by their teachers, Scott Slatter and Sean Falkner, today. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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 the members of the Assembly 10 staff from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Every day I witness the passion and commitment that our Culture and Tourism team has, members of the Alberta public service delivering programs and services that contribute to making our province such a great place to live, visit, and invest in. This afternoon I'm proud to welcome them to observe first-hand the work that we do in the Legislative Assembly. *Cet après-midi je suis fier de les accueillir pour observer le travail que nous faisons ici.* I'd ask them to rise as I call their names: Lucie Beauchamp, Catherine Braun-Rodriguez, Karin Buchanan, Nathan Cross, Lisa Gauthier, Brandon Nadeau, Alexis Nelson, Heather Northcott, Christina Harbak, Jessica Yu, and Mary Gilev. I'd ask my colleagues to give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Seeing and hearing none, Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Great honour for me today to rise and introduce to you and through you to the

House a constituent, an active environmental protector with the Alberta Wilderness Association, Carolyn Campbell, here on behalf of the Wilderness Association and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. AWA's work will be familiar to many of us in the Assembly, the oldest wilderness conservation group in Alberta, seeking a network of representative protected areas throughout the province for caribou. Founded in 1965, AWA has a proven history of raising awareness and achieving conservation actions for wildlands, wild waters, and wildlife. Carolyn is a conservation specialist with AWA, and in her 10-year tenure she has taken the lead on caribou conservation and continues to work tirelessly with her colleagues throughout Alberta and across the nation to see habitat protected, just as the caribou need to be. She has now risen, and I'd ask that we give her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

I have a couple of more introductions, Mr. Speaker. Sorry; I'm just not quite finished. Today we are tabling a petition and over 300 postcards highlighting the threats to caribou in northern Alberta. Among those signatories is Robert Bateman, the famous painter from the west coast. I'm afraid I've left the other names back in my office, but I'll submit those to *Hansard* for the record.

Thank you.

The Speaker: There's another time in the agenda when you could table that document.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly four Calgary-Bow residents: Marnie and Richard Deschenes and their sons Hudson and Nathan. Recently I met with the Deschenes to discuss their experience of pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders, also known as PANDAS and PANS. I will speak more of PANDAS and PANS later today with the intent to bring increased awareness and education on this serious and devastating disorder. I'd ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an organization representing very skilled and fine entrepreneurs in Alberta, in fact, I think the most skilled and finest entrepreneurs in the whole province. Mr. Brad Mitchell, CEO designate of the Alberta Real Estate Association, and approximately 47 additional members of AREA are attending their annual Government Liaison Days conference. AREA provides a wide range of advocacy, professional development, and member services, which benefit both professionals in the industry and the clients they serve. I thank my guests for their great work and service to Albertans. I'd ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise with two sets of introductions today. The first is Art and Sandra Heinrichs. Actually, I'll ask them to stand. First, I will thank them through you, Mr. Speaker. They are the parents of Brianna, my long-time legislative assistant, who is one of the hardest working people that I know. They are also, interestingly enough, constituents of Calgary-Lougheed, and I will say that I was happy to see a picture the other day where they do have a Mr. Kenney lawn sign on their lawn,

which is excellent. This is their first time at the Legislature, and I would ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is two fellows that I am very close to and always happy to see here. One is no stranger to this House. He's been here before and has friends in all parties, and that is my dad, Pat Nixon, who's by for another visit, and I'd ask if he'd stand up. With him today is my little brother Shane. As I've told you before, I have five brothers, and if you think it's hard keeping control of me, you can imagine what it's like keeping control of six of us. Shane is back from gallivanting all over the world. Recently I think he's been to about 38 countries. I know this because he's been gone a long time and he leaves his dog at my house. But I'm happy to see him here at the Legislature for the very first time. I would ask that they both receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. I appreciate that you had your hands full.
The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House three Calgary-West constituents who are working hard on behalf of their community. Elio Cozzi, Suzette Pereira, and Fiona Christiansen are all members of the Springbank Hill Community Association. They are here today to learn more about plans for the southwest ring road as it pertains to their community. I'd ask my guests to please rise – they are sitting in the public gallery – and I'd ask them to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Amber Ruddy, who is the director of provincial affairs for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Based out of Calgary, Amber has been an advocate on behalf of members in Alberta, working with governments on files like finance, labour, and – you guessed it – red tape. Amber and I had a great meeting today, discussing the challenges facing small business and the ways that we can respond as a government in terms of her advocacy work. It is my hope that all of our colleagues in the Legislature can mark the third week of January on their calendars as Red Tape Awareness Week. If I could ask Amber to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a number of citizens who work very hard advocating for seniors in Alberta. I'm pleased to introduce Roy Avery, Julie Ali, Ed Lonsdale, Irene Simpson, Jack Masson, Kerry Modin, and Ruth Adria. They're all right there. I was going to ask you to stand, please, and if I could have all the members give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The hon. Member for Athabasca – I'm sorry.

Mr. Gill: No problem. Thank you, sir. Once again it's my honour to rise and introduce my dear friend Sanjit Singh, who is a past president of the Appraisal Institute of Canada, Alberta chapter. We

went to school together. He's attending the Alberta Real Estate Association MLA meet-and-greet today, and unfortunately he lives in Calgary-Foothills. I'd ask him to rise. On behalf of my colleague from Calgary-Foothills and I we welcome you, and I'd ask all the members to give him the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly George Ellen, Dennis Schmidt, and Seth Gulevich. George and Dennis are the president and vice-president of my riding association as well as my good friends, and I appreciate all the hard work that they do for us in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. Seth has a keen interest in politics, and I'm very glad that his grandfather George was able to bring him to the Legislature so he can see what we all do here. I would ask that they now rise – I see that they are seated in the gallery – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two people who are visiting us today. The first is Bill Moore-Kilgannon, who has been my chief of staff in Advanced Education for the last 11 months. He is visited by his son Neil Moore-Kilgannon, who is turning 25 today. And to celebrate his birthday, he decided to leave the drab and dreary city of Vancouver, a city which I would note is an excellent place to build a pipeline, and come and spend his 25th birthday visiting us here today. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on your behalf to introduce to all members of the Assembly members from the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board: Garry Ruff, past president and current director; Jeff Lanigan, political action representative; Randeem Bray, executive officer; and Jennifer McKenzie, the AREA director for Medicine Hat. The Medicine Hat Real Estate Board was chartered in 1955 and serves 140 realtors in 11 brokerages. They are members of the Alberta Real Estate Association and the Canadian Real Estate Association. Medicine Hat is Canada's sunniest city, and its realtors offer their services with an equally bright disposition. They are seated in your gallery, and I'd ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. Thanks for coming.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had a guest who was already introduced by the Member for Calgary-Greenway, but he thinks he's fortunate to live in the beautiful, fantastic, outstanding riding of Calgary-Foothills. His wife, Jimmi Singh, is also running a retail business. They have three beautiful sons, and they call Calgary-Foothills home. I'd ask everyone to give them a warm welcome.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce Les Landry. Many of you have introduced him and have seen him here. He is an advocate for human rights, special needs, PTSD, and service dogs. Can we please give him the warm welcome of the House?

The Speaker: Any more introductions, hon. members? The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly advocates with Muscular Dystrophy Canada seated in the members' gallery. We're truly fortunate to have organizations like Muscular Dystrophy Canada. Our government was proud to declare September as muscular dystrophy month in Alberta. Their advocacy and fundraising efforts are vital to improving the lives of individuals and families living with this condition. I'd ask that Fraser Hall, services specialist in Alberta, along with Cedric Way, Adeline Way, Meagan Klatt, Tami Klatt, Nathan Dyjur, Shanon Brausen, Louann Perry, Heather Forsyth, and Pyper Whitecotton rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Support for Small Business

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Small businesses in Alberta make local communities across our province hum. They fuel local economies and are the lifeblood of rural Alberta.

In my constituency are cafés like Kinny's Sweet Retreat, which serves eggnog lattes and turkey brie sandwiches in a warm, inviting space in downtown Fort Saskatchewan; pubs like Two Sergeants Brewing, which continues to expand their business reach with new access to local farmers' markets made possible by recent government regulation changes; Vegreville's local country music radio station, 106.5, which connects the region to the latest news, community events, and the trading post; local value-added food like Stawnychy's meat in Mundare, which sells back bacon and pepperoni out of their storefront and distributes their world-renowned Ukrainian sausage to grocery retailers across Alberta.

Ventures like these, created by passionate people willing to take on the risk of making a living for themselves, make up 95.5 per cent of all businesses in Alberta and 35 per cent of our GDP. This is why it is crucial for our government to support them by doing things that matter like reducing the small-business tax by one-third, to 2 per cent, providing \$1.5 billion in small-business loans to Alberta Treasury Branches, creating Alberta's export expansion package, and continuing to scrutinize each and every regulation to determine if it is easy for businesses to understand and if it is still relevant in a quickly changing world.

Mr. Speaker, small business provides hundreds of thousands of jobs to working families, and they inject \$100 billion a year into our hometowns and communities. They are our coaches, our volunteers, our neighbours, and they are the engine of Alberta's economy.

Merry Christmas, Mr. Speaker, and remember that Santa shops local.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Fort McMurray Wildfire Recovery

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was just over a year and a half ago that I got a call from my nephew Phil Jean that my home and the homes of many Fort McMurray residents were on fire. It was an event that would become the most expensive natural disaster in the history of Canada and would devastate my hometown, claiming my home and the homes and businesses of 2,400 other families. It forced the evacuation of 80,000 people, and the cleanup and rebuild is estimated to be in the range of \$5.4 billion. The temporary shutdown of the oil sands alone due to the wildfire impact led to a \$1.4 billion loss to our oil industry here in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the fire has not just taken an economic impact but has also taken an enormous personal toll on the residents of Fort McMurray. As of this month AHS has received over 36,000 requests for help with addictions and mental health since the wildfire, and in-patient beds for people at risk of harming themselves are always full. That is up dramatically from previous years, where they fielded approximately 1,000 calls per year. The effect of this fire will go on for decades, if not generations.

The Speaker: Take your time, hon. member.

1:50

Mr. Jean: Policy decisions by the people in this place are important and have a dramatic impact on people's lives.

While the damage done to Fort McMurray is undeniable, our community has also persevered with grace, courage, and compassion. Homes are springing up in areas all around Fort McMurray that were reduced to ash. Not-for-profit groups are actively working to rebuild the homes of the under- or uninsured. School enrolment in both the public and Catholic school boards is back to prefire levels. Business engagement is growing through the chamber of commerce, and unemployment, which is a serious concern, is falling.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the people of Fort McMurray. While we may have been knocked down, we are not knocked out, and we are well on our way to being back in fighting form.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

Oral Question Period

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

Tax Policies and Provincial Revenue

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the latest numbers from this government yet again show the foolish assumptions of the NDP's plan. The NDP insists on raising taxes, supposedly to raise more revenue. The results? They bring in far less than anticipated: \$330 million less in personal income taxes, \$43 million less in corporate taxes. It's clear what happened. The NDP brought in ideological tax hikes and drove away economic activity. The question to the Premier is this: will the NDP admit that their ideological tax increases were wrong and that they've actually damaged the province of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms. Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is certainly a very creative interpretation of the numbers that were released today by the Minister of Finance. In fact, we know revenues are down because the price of oil dropped from over \$100 a barrel to below \$30 a barrel, and over 100,000 Albertans lost their

jobs. We know that Alberta families are suffering and were suffering, and that's why our government made a choice to stand with them. Our government made a choice to invest in Alberta, to stimulate economic activity, to support job growth. The other thing in the report that the member opposite quotes from today is that it's working. Our growth is up by 4 per cent and . . .

Mr. Nixon: In the middle of a recession the NDP hiked taxes on job creators by 20 per cent. They keep wanting to hide from their tax hikes. It's ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. They hiked taxes on income, they hiked taxes on property, and of course they brought in the largest tax increase in Alberta's history, the job-killing carbon tax, which they hid from Albertans and did not campaign on. Yet revenues from taxes are consistently lower than planned for. The question is simple. Will this government, will this Premier admit that they made a mistake, they're actually damaging the province, they're damaging our economic growth, and they're causing problems for the people of Alberta?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will admit is that growth is up, jobs are up, manufacturing is up, retail sales are up, small-business confidence is up. The last thing on the planet that I would do is take advice from the members opposite so that we could see the kind of negative outcomes that we see just one province to the east of us. We made a decision to support Albertans and to support Alberta and to support Alberta businesses, and I am proud to say that it is starting to work.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, a minute ago the Premier said that business was down. Now she says that business is up. I'm confused.

The NDP are now hilariously claiming that the deficit is shrinking. And how is it supposedly shrinking? Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. The NDP is taking a quarter billion dollars from the risk adjustment fund. It's a shell game. Will the NDP and this Premier admit that the deficit would have actually modestly increased if not for using the risk adjustment fund, or will they continue to deceive Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in our budget the Minister of Finance projected that we would deliver a \$10.3 billion deficit this year as a result of our government making a choice to invest in jobs, to invest in important public services, and to invest in making life more affordable for regular Alberta families. That plan is working. Jobs are up. Investment is up. Growth is up. We are turning a corner. We didn't turn our backs on Albertans like the members opposite would have had us do, and I am very proud that it was our government that was in charge when this crisis hit.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Carbon Levy Questions to the Premier

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Premier took calls on CBC Radio. A job creator named Norm called in. Norm said that the NDP's carbon tax is costing his business \$40,000 a year. Norm asked the Premier how she thought that was justified. The Premier's response: in short, she told Norm that he must be mistaken, that the carbon tax was not hurting his business, that it was actually helping. She had the nerve to tell the man what the carbon tax was doing to his business. It is appalling. Will the Premier take back her answer to Norm, apologize for what she said, and stop insulting Albertans as she tries to defend her ideological policies?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again the members opposite are really taking liberty with the facts. What I indicated this morning was simply that the carbon levy has not yet been applied to most of the oil and gas sector. That's all I said.

Mr. Speaker, what I also did was talk about how it's a fundamentally important part of our plan to help leaders in the energy industry reposition our industry as the most sustainable and responsible in the world. It is that plan that is going to help us do what the members opposite were unable to do for 10 years, which is get . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what she told Norm was to take the bus, basically, like she told Albertans already. The Premier was dismissive of this hard-working Albertan, who's been walloped by her carbon tax. Let me read his question in full.

I operate an industrial business here in Edmonton. We get most of our work from the energy industry. The carbon tax this year has resulted in an increase in cost to our business of \$40,000 roughly, and I'm curious to hear your thoughts on how that is justified. And why does that make sense?

The Premier's response to that was to tell Norm that he was wrong and that his business was not being impacted by her ideological, job-killing carbon tax. Will the Premier take that back and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will say is that the member opposite should simply stop making things up. I think he is learning some very bad practices from his brand new leader, and I would suggest that he probably ought to stop it.

The other thing that I will say is that as a result of our climate leadership plan one of the things we were able to do was to drop the small-business tax by one-third. That is something that arose as a result of the climate leadership plan.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of programs that support businesses which are trade exposed that have significant impacts as a result of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: It's interesting with this NDP government. They're always right; everybody else is always wrong. When they're called on the things that they're doing, they then call their opponents liars. It's shocking, Mr. Speaker.

But here are some facts. Norm says that the carbon tax is costing his business \$40,000 a year, and that will of course increase next year as a result of this government's policies. This Premier on the radio today – it's very easy to get; you can get it on the Internet anytime that you want – insulted this man, this job creator in our province, did not acknowledge that her job-killing carbon tax was having a negative impact on this man's business and on the people that he hires. It's disappointing, and she should . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, our government is proud to have brought in a climate change leadership plan, which was the fundamental reason for why the Kinder Morgan pipeline was approved by the federal government. That is why we are able to work successfully to get a pipeline to tidewater, something that

will improve economic activity throughout this province, something that will improve the outcomes for the energy industry throughout this province, and something that will also contribute to the level of growth that we're already seeing in this province amongst businesses.

The Speaker: Third main question.

2:00

Rural Crime

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday over a hundred people, victims of crime in rural Alberta from where I'm from, particularly in central Alberta, came to this House, drove for hours, to get results from this government, to look at this government and say: what's happening to us is wrong. The opposition brought forward a motion, a motion for emergency debate, to help those people, and this NDP government stood in this House and spoke against that motion. They refused to help the people of Alberta that are being robbed and abused, and I can tell you that I've had a lot of phone calls about it. They're tired of it. Will this government reconsider and finally call a debate so that we can stand up for the victims who are being victimized by criminals in our communities?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you well know, it was actually you who made the decision. As well, we never actually debated the motion, so we certainly didn't speak against the motion. But what we will say and what we said throughout question period all yesterday is that we understand that people in rural communities are concerned about crime, and that is why we are continuing to invest in crime prevention, whether it be through the over half a billion dollars that we put into policing, whether it be through the additional programs that we're seeing with the RCMP, with the integrated crime unit, with ALERT, and the many . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. You made a decision, but this government across the way spoke against this motion. They spoke against getting results for the people of central Alberta in this Chamber. They provided no alternatives to those people. They completely refused to acknowledge that they are being victimized. They, the Government House Leader, had the nerve to say that it wasn't urgent. Well, I can tell you that people in my communities that are being robbed daily at gunpoint or having home invasions think it is urgent. Will this NDP Premier and this NDP government finally do something about it?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that providing more grandstanding opportunities for the member opposite to make untrue statements and call people names over on the other side of the House is not going to deal with the legitimate crime concerns that people feel in a number of different communities. However, the work that our government is doing will. That is why we supported the ALERT program even after the federal Conservatives pulled the funding for it. That is why we continue to support well-funded policing in our rural communities. That's why we will continue to do it notwithstanding calls for massive cuts.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Let me be very clear. I will stand in this House every day and defend the people of rural Alberta. I will stand in this House every day and defend Albertans while they're being victimized. Mr.

Speaker, through you to the Premier, if the Premier wants to call that grandstanding, that's ridiculous. It is time for her to stand up as the Premier for the people of Alberta. This is not a partisan issue. They are being robbed. They are being victimized. The crime rates in rural Alberta are an epidemic. The police are appalled. They're asking for help. We're asking for help. Will this Premier stop blaming people, stand up, do her job, and help the people of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thankfully, it's not my job to yell and scream, and frankly that's not actually going to be what gets outcomes. What is our job is to protect the important funding to our justice system that would be significantly jeopardized were we to move ahead with the 20 per cent cuts that the members opposite want us to pursue. The members opposite constantly refer to B.C. as the standard that we should be following. The members opposite might be interested to know that in B.C. rural communities of 5,000 and less have to levy their own taxes to pay for 50 per cent of their policing costs, yet in Alberta it's fully funded. Those are the kinds of decisions that we chose . . .

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

Provincial Fiscal Update

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's fiscal update shows that despite the government's best attempt at budgeting, Albertans face \$248 million in unplanned increases in operating expenses and a \$247 million revenue shortfall, largely because of lower corporate and personal income taxes, which reflect Alberta's fiscal health. This is after two and a half years of budgets which have all missed the government's own mark. When will the Finance minister learn from these mistakes and make accurate and realistic budgets that Albertans can trust?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, our plan is working. The plan of compassionately reducing spending is working. We are pulling that spending down. In the meantime the economy is growing. We had the backs of Albertans. Now the economy is growing. We can look at our budgets more closely now, and going forward, we will reduce that spending. [interjections]

The Speaker: Keep calm, folks.

Ms McPherson: Today's fiscal update revealed very large capital plan reductions, including \$359 million from Transportation, \$258 million from Education, \$126 million from Health, \$69 million from Infrastructure, and \$30 million from Seniors and Housing. To the Minister of Infrastructure: which communities will not get the desperately needed schools, health facilities, and seniors' facilities that the government promised, and how can Albertans trust any Infrastructure promises this government makes in the future?

Ms Jansen: I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I think is always important to remember is infrastructure in this province and that what we have been doing with a monumental infrastructure build, almost \$30 billion over four years, is repairing the damage that was done during the Klein years, when, of course, we had some folks who are on the other side who made the decision that it was actually more important to have a fiscal bottom line . . .

The Speaker: Please stop the clock. [interjections] Order. Now. [interjections]

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order. [interjections] Hon. members, please. Fortunately, at least one of the school groups left.

Ms McPherson: This government promised major changes to the way government operates but shows no sign of doing things differently than the previous government, including basing its budget on nonrenewable resource revenue, cutting school and hospital construction, and repeatedly failing to manage operational spending. When will this government abandon the Conservative playbook of endless infrastructure cuts and arbitrary political decisions about critical program spending?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, well, that's a bit rich coming from the conservative party over there. My understanding is that that party has just been taken over by the PCs because the Wildrose took over their party, so I don't know where the Alberta Party people are going to go.

But you know what? On this side, Mr. Speaker, we made investments when it was time to make investments. We made good investments, and we got great support from the municipalities. I was just at the AUMA and the AAMD and C, and the support was wonderful. But you know what? It's time that we take another look at it and look at the budget and look at the debt and the deficit and fix it. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

The Member for Red Deer-South.

School Nutrition Programs

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been a long-time advocate for school nutrition programs. Children cannot learn if they are hungry. I also understand that school nutrition programs cost money. To the Minister of Education: is there adequate funding for the number of students involved now?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our school nutrition projects across the province of Alberta have been an unqualified success. Last year we had 14 school districts, with about \$250,000 to each of them, move on school nutrition. It was so successful that we expanded to all 62 school boards now in the province of Alberta. We can definitely see measurable increased attendance rates, and students' behaviour is improving. Their focus is better. It's better for physical and mental health as well. The school nutrition program here in the province of Alberta is working, and our government is very, very proud of it.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: are schools saving money by utilizing community partners, and if so, is that money supporting local economies?

Mr. Eggen: Well, yes. It's been very interesting because we gave plenty of latitude for school nutrition programs to unfold across the province. For example, in the Livingstone Range school division they have a farm-to-table approach, which is using local food and existing programs that were already there. The Medicine Hat school

district is using the science curriculum as part of their programming as well. In the Northern Lights school division we have elementary school students being fed by the high school cooking program. So, Mr. Speaker, yeah, there's been a lot of creativity, a lot of latitude. The school nutrition program is working, and it's something we should all . . .

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How many children are being supported by the program expansion now, and have we seen improved learning outcomes for these same children?

Mr. Eggen: Well, yes. The pilot program from last year was feeding about 5,000 students per day. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to say that with our recent expansion we are now feeding more than 22,000 students per day across the province of Alberta. It's something to be very proud of. We see increased attendance, more healthy food choices. There is education associated with those healthy choices, so students can be learning not just to eat on that day a healthy choice but to have those habits for the rest of their lives.

Emergency Medical Services and Worker Supports

Mr. Fraser: I spoke yesterday about the pressing need for more EMS funding. Providing adequate resources for our emergency medical services seems like an issue we can all agree on. It will increase the level of care provided to Albertans in medical emergencies and save the province money in the long term by reducing expensive EMS hospital wait times and allowing rural ambulances to stay closer to home. While this problem won't be solved overnight, we need to take the first step in bringing EMS funding to meet the current demand. To the Premier: will you commit, at the very least, to provide enough EMS funding in the next budget to add an additional ambulance in both Calgary and Edmonton, or can you do better than that?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's very important for us to ensure that EMS has proper coverage, not just in the cities but right across the province of Alberta, and further to that point, we have seen that there's been plenty of consultation in regard to how EMS people on the ground can help us to make those decisions. I mean, that's part of the budgeting process. For example, they are just equipping more than 350 ambulances with power stretchers. This was a direct result of advocacy from EMS personnel on the ground to make their jobs better and, thus, to make life better for Alberta families.

Mr. Fraser: Given that paramedic services are in high demand, with year-over-year increased call volume, and given that paramedics are highly trained and competent practitioners – they could be doing more to treat and refer nonemergent patients to more appropriate care facilities rather than the most expensive, the emergency department – and given that hallway waits kill paramedic morale and that it's also substandard patient care and costs millions in wasted resources, to the Premier: when will you allow paramedics to practise to their full scope to provide the care Albertans deserve, and will you commit to ending the practice of EMS hallway waits?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, these are issues that are being dealt with in consultation with EMS workers on the ground. We know that to utilize the full scope of practice of any health care worker will help us to reduce wait times, to improve health outcomes, and to save money as well. So in consultation with EMS providers and the unions that represent them, certainly I believe that AHS is working to achieve that full scope of practice for paramedics to treat patients immediately and to ensure that we have the timely dissemination of health services.

Mr. Fraser: I want to thank this government for offering presumptive coverages for cardiac events under the Workers' Compensation Act for paramedics. Given that a cardiac event took the life of my friend, colleague, and mentor David Sartorelli just hours after his last EMS shift, which highlighted this issue – Dave was a loyal servant to this province for over 32 years – to the Minister of Labour: would you be so kind as to name this new clause that protects paramedics the David Sartorelli clause?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is because of stories like David's that we did adjust that clause within Bill 30. I appreciate very much the recommendation, and I'd like to follow up with the member after question period.

Thank you.

Tax Policies and Economic Development

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Finance minister released the second-quarter update, and it shows yet again that income and corporate tax revenue are down significantly despite the NDP raising those same tax rates. And the NDP's union bosses are demanding: raise taxes higher. On this side of the House we know why higher taxes don't result in higher incomes and more wealth. To the minister: do you understand why raising income and corporate taxes results in less revenue overall?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. You know, it sounds very much like the question that was posed to the Premier just a few seconds ago. What I would add to her answer is that we went through the toughest recession in a generation. People were out of work. People's incomes were lower. Corporations were not doing as well. Mr. Speaker, those are the reasons why corporate and personal income taxes weren't as high. But they will come back because the economy is coming back as a result of the work of this side, not that side.

Mr. Barnes: Given that the Fraser Institute released their Global Petroleum Survey, which surveys petroleum managers regarding barriers to investment in oil and gas in various jurisdictions around the world – and the good news is that Alberta isn't last. NDP, you have your B.C. cousins to thank for that. While the B.C. government is openly antipipeline, Alberta's NDP has purchased social licence. To the minister: are you embarrassed that your government's social licence has resulted in the same weak investment climate as British Columbia's?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. I think what the speaker should be embarrassed about is the fact that he's quoting Rebel media and he's quoting the Fraser Institute. You know, take a huge grain of salt, a barrel of salt, when you listen to those quotes, Mr. Speaker.

What I can tell you is that the economy is coming back, jobs are up, wages are up, growth is up, crop and livestock sales are up. Up, up, up: what about quoting that? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Given that I'm prepared to answer Albertans' questions, why won't you answer mine?

Given that when asked to identify why they weren't investing in Alberta, investors blamed the tax rates, the tax regime in Alberta, and all the new climate change regulations that your government has put in place – so much for social licence – to the minister: when will this government come to its senses, abandon these foolhardy and impulsive tax increases, and return Alberta to the place it should be, the best place to invest in the entire world?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me tell you who has invested in Alberta in the last six months: Amazon, RocketSpace, Swoop, Champion Petfoods, Pinnacle, Google, Cavendish Farms.

Let me get back to my "up" list, Mr. Speaker. Retail sales are up, housing starts are up, exports are up, restaurant sales are up, business incorporation is up. Up, up, up.

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

Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Associate Minister of Health spoke about the latest opioid data in the province, saying, quote: the most important thing we can do is to keep doing what we're doing. End quote. That's a real poor answer since opioid overdoses have increased 40 per cent from last year. To the government. Albertans don't want more opioid-related deaths; they want to see significant action and decline in those numbers. When can Albertans start seeing a multifaceted and co-ordinated approach to reducing these unnecessary deaths?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the number of Albertans who are losing their lives is very high in regard to this opioid crisis, and it should remind us that the opioid crisis is very serious and requires serious action. This government is opening thousands of new treatment spaces across the province, expanding telehealth to more remote communities. As a result, about four times as many Albertans are getting the treatment that they had last year. It's a grave situation, and we all need to work together to find a solution.

2:20

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, this issue needs a unified and co-ordinated approach, and we, the Official Opposition, are here to help. Some questions for you, sir. Are you looking at empowering families, encouraging them to be involved in the rehabilitation therapy? Are you screening and providing a risk analysis of potential opioid users in our system and providing them with oversight and education? Are you incorporating law enforcement, the courts, and social workers in the solution? What are you doing to combat the opioid crisis other than discouraging gentrification in Edmonton's Chinatown with injection clinics?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, this is an unprecedented emergency, and it requires many different responses, something that has not been perhaps done in the past. The response is being guided by an emergency commission of public health leaders, physicians, law enforcement, parent advocates, people with lived

experience. If the opposition wants to help with that, that's fine, too. We've certainly accepted all the recommendations from this commission, and we're looking to implement those as quickly as possible.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, simply throwing money at this situation will not get things better. Has this government identified treatment solutions that bridge the gap between detox and addiction treatment to prevent overdoses? Have you investigated drug courts and rehabilitation as opposed to incarceration? Has this government looked at re-educating not just physicians but orthopaedic surgeons, pediatricians, and dentists to ensure understanding and education about opioids? Will this government heed advice from so many reports and provide a solid plan to Albertans that encompasses a multifaceted and co-ordinated approach to this crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, another important addition to that is to have supervised consumption services in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. I think the members opposite should take a serious, hard look at their opposition to these things because it's certainly part of a way by which we can help to work on this crisis. We have also distributed more than 31,000 naloxone kits and \$3 million in funding to indigenous communities and organizations for their supports. I mean, this is a very challenging situation. It's important that we all work together and work with vigour to ensure that we reduce deaths and injury from opioids.

Publication Ban on Children Who Die in Care

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, last year, in response to the tragic handling of Serenity's file, the opposition proposed a robust motion that would have seen a select special committee of the Legislature review the safety and security of children in government care. The government chose to form a ministerial panel instead. Now, we all tried to work hard on that, but so far the NDP does not want to talk about the publication ban on children who die in care. The panel has been operating for a year. To the Children's Services minister: when will the panel be allowed to talk about the publication ban regulation?

The Speaker: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I will be able to respond to the question once I have the opportunity to discuss this further with the ministry, and I'll be happy to report to the Legislature.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Where's Sabir?

The Speaker: Hon. member, remember about names.
First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. That was the same amount of discussion the committee has had just for the record.

Given that in 2014, when she was in opposition, the Premier had an amendment passed in the Legislature requiring that changes to the publication ban regulation be made through a committee of the Legislature and given that the minister's panel is not an actual committee of the Legislature, to the Children's Services minister: will you admit that instead of being transparent, you've put politics and self-interest ahead of good policy, as the Premier recommended, when it comes to the publication ban issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We care about what happens to children in care in this province, and we're going to do the work that is necessary to ensure that we arrive at a process that reflects the needs, that we are meeting the needs that are being presented to us. We're going to be able to do that if we put aside the partisan politics and actually get down to working on ensuring that we arrive at a situation where everybody who is involved is comfortable with the way forward. But the cuts that the members opposite would propose would make that work very difficult.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that it's the government that's stopping this from being talked about. Everybody but them has been nonpartisan on this issue. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Given that back in 2014 the Premier herself expressed deep concerns about the publication ban regulation as it still stands this day, two and a half years after the NDP have been in government – they have done nothing on it – and given that the panel hasn't been allowed by the minister to address this issue even though the expert members of the public want to, to the minister: what will you do to fix concerns that Albertans and your own Premier have with the publication ban? Will you do something?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, what we need to do is to come together and work as a Legislature. We are going to do that by ensuring that the collaborative process, that we have already started, continues. We're going to listen to the advice that we're going to receive and make decisions going forward. But, once again, trying to turn this issue into a hyperpartisan situation is not going to get us results. I ask them to please put that aside and start looking at a collaborative way because these children are depending on all of us to get this right.

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

Public Libraries

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Libraries play an important role in communities right across Alberta. Beyond just lending out books, they provide meeting and study spaces, administer exams, and support Albertans in their pursuit of acquiring new skills. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how does this government support libraries across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Our government understands the crucial role that libraries play in their communities as hubs. That's why we've continued to fund libraries through these economic times rather than slash like some other provinces have. This year alone we've provided \$30 million in operating grants to 225 public library boards. Our government also funds SuperNet connectivity and funds and provides e-content such as e-books to libraries across the province. This government is committed to maintaining and continuing the resources and services that Albertans rely on, and that includes libraries.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the growing use of online tools in job recruitment and given libraries' role in Internet access for many low-income Albertans, to the same minister: is this important function in job-seeking supported by the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. As previously mentioned, the GOA does support access to SuperNet connectivity for all public libraries in Alberta. This happens through an investment in SuperNet of between \$1.5 million to \$2 million a year. In addition, the province also invests and provides access to e-content such as Mango language learning so patrons can develop language skills and prepare for jobs. We also provide resources for people with print disabilities through our investment in the National Network for Equitable Library Service, and our government is also expanding services to people in indigenous communities.

The Speaker: Second supplemental

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that while demand for online digital services is increasing, at the same time the demand for brick-and-mortar library space is also increasing, to the same minister: what options are available for communities as they struggle with limited space in their libraries?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Providing space for public libraries is a municipal responsibility. The province supports public library services by providing \$30 million in operating grants and over \$4 million in network support. However, due to the infrastructure deficit, communities were left with years of inaction. Our government did recently provide a one-time \$10.7 million grant in capital funding to six regional library systems to renovate their headquarter buildings. This investment will help regional library systems better serve their rural libraries and support the communities and regions around Grande Prairie, Spruce Grove, Lacombe, Strathmore, Medicine Hat, and Lethbridge.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Electricity Power Purchase Arrangement Lawsuit

Mr. MacIntyre: The court has ruled in favour of Calgary's Enmax yet again, compelling the once independent Balancing Pool to fulfill their legal obligation to assess and verify that the NDP's tax increase on electrical generators violated the government's contracts by rendering Keephills more unprofitable, just like every other thermal PPA. Minister, why did your government interfere with what is intended to be an arm's-length agency when it prevented the Balancing Pool from doing its legally mandated job?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, first of all, I'm going to make no apologies for standing up for Albertans against unfair electricity charges that resulted from bad deals made by the previous government. To be clear, this legal decision has no bearing on whether or not Enmax has the legal right to return the agreements in the first place. For the record, Enmax is the only company that has not settled with us on this matter, and we are

confident that our legal position is solid. We will still fully participate in proving this in court, that they have no . . .

2:30

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. MacIntyre: The court disagrees with you, Minister. Given that this decision confirms that injunctive relief is available to parties where a statutory body fails to perform its legal obligations and given that Enmax isn't the only job creator in Alberta that this NDP chose to tar with mistruths about violating the terms of a long-held government contract, how many more dollars will it cost taxpayers on account of your government's misguided decision to interfere with the Balancing Pool's independence?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we took action on this side of the House to protect Alberta families. The other side of the House would continue with a broken system that favours industry over Albertans. We're not going to do that. We negotiated with companies and gave the Balancing Pool a loan. They continue to defend the backroom deals that the previous government did, and they're standing up for industry. Rather, on this side we're standing up for everyday Albertans.

Mr. MacIntyre: In granting this injunction, the court held that Enmax had proven that they would suffer irreparable harm because of the Balancing Pool's inaction. Given that Albertans have now seen multiple rulings demonstrating the incompetent manner in which one of Alberta's most critical files has been managed and given the clear record of political interference with what is meant to be an arm's-length Balancing Pool, Minister, when can Albertans expect your letter of resignation over these billion-dollar mistakes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to commend the Minister of Energy for the job that she's done. This is an outstanding Minister of Energy who has worked very hard on a number of very critical files. One of the important things to remember here . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Mason: One of the important things to remember here is that this minister and this government stand up for consumers in this province to protect them from unrealistic and unreasonable prices, Mr. Speaker.

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

Agricultural Society Funding

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has almost 300 agricultural societies whose work enhances the lives of hundreds of thousands of rural citizens. These societies operate arenas and community halls, and they host rodeos, fairs, festivals, and trade shows, all of which enrich their communities. To the minister of agriculture: do you support the work of our agricultural societies?

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 his very important question. Our government very much values and recognizes the important work that ag societies do

all across this province. We understand that they make life better for Albertans in small towns and rural communities across this province. Our government has been in the process of assessing the current budget to find savings in order to fairly and responsibly reduce the deficit, but I can tell you that we know the great work that ag societies do. That is why we are completely funding them at the exact same levels as we did last year.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister deserves thanks for finally giving ag societies the grants they were expecting this year and given that ag societies went through a lot of unnecessary worry while they waited to learn if they could continue to operate their recreation centres and other community amenities, to the same minister: why did you leave them hanging so long?

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I mean, it's interesting that, you know, depending on who pops up over there to ask a question, some want cuts; some want spending. I think it's just a whole lot of confusion going on on that side of the House.

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that our government is very thoughtfully, compassionately, and prudently looking at ways that we can reduce our spending. We recognize, as the Minister of Finance has pointed out, that we are moving toward a path to balance, but we did recognize the important work that ag societies are doing in this province. That's why the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has decided to fund all of our ag societies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I know that the minister of agriculture is working hard to secure next year's grants for ag societies – and I thank him for that – and given that it is actually the minister of Treasury Board and Finance who dictates the ag minister's budget, to the Minister of Finance: can you please tell the volunteers today if their grants will be available for them as they prepare their budgets for next year, not halfway through their operating year?

The Speaker: Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member will know from when he served in government, it's a little premature to be talking about next year's budget. This is one of the processes that we're going through. However, we do recognize the valuable and important contributions that ag societies make to all of rural Alberta and, in fact, all of our province. That will be one of the factors that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry looks at when he looks within his budget under the direction of the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance.

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

Calgary Southwest Ring Road Construction Concerns

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgary-West constituents are very concerned about the design and plan for the portion of the southwest ring road that is adjacent to their communities. The Springbank Hill Community Association along with the Slopes have both expressed concerns surrounding noise attenuation and quality of life. Can the minister confirm that his department has addressed these concerns, which the communities have specifically brought to his department's attention?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I can assure the House that our department has been very open with respect to meeting with communities, and I've been very open about meeting with members of the opposition and of the government who are representing their constituents on these matters. Construction, unfortunately, has been planned by the previous government very close to existing neighbourhoods, and that presents a number of operational problems during construction. We've done our very best to mitigate all of the concerns relative to dust, noise, and odour.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that the minister has met with me on two previous occasions for ring road concerns only after I have asked him questions in the House and given that here I am again, having received no correspondence from his office about these ring road concerns, again to the minister. The quality of life of these communities is suffering. Will you please commit to building the berms and the sound attenuation walls they are requesting?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member knows that I am always available, open to meeting with him and other members. All he has to do is ask instead of referring to some correspondence. I don't know where it comes from.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Because your office isn't responding.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that when I have the opportunity to meet with the minister, our conversations have been professional and respectful – and I appreciate that – and given that I would like to continue that relationship on behalf of the people of Calgary-West, Minister, will you commit today to meeting with the Springbank Hill Community Association and the representatives from the Slopes and personally address their concerns?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, our department and my ministry have been open to meeting with community members and their representatives here in the Assembly. That has not changed, but if the hon. member wants to represent his community in a more effective way, he should just pick up the phone, and I'll fix his problems if I can.

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

Carbon Levy Revenue and Rebates

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government added its carbon tax to the price of fuel, household heating, and many other basic supplies, but it pats itself on the back for providing a small rebate to Albertans. Minister, can you please tell Albertans how much it costs to administer the rebate program? Minister, Albertans are looking for a number, not the rhetoric, not the anger machine, not what we have done or what we're going to do, just the number.

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that two-thirds of Albertans are receiving a rebate for the carbon levy, which is being administered through Treasury Board

and Finance. Two-thirds of Albertans will get a rebate on the carbon levy. It will increase on January 1. If you're a couple who makes less than \$95,000, you're getting a \$450 rebate. If you have two kids, you'll get \$540.

2:40

Mr. Gill: Again the same rhetoric.

Given that this government's budget figures indicate that it expects to collect over \$1 billion this year alone and the total will jump to \$1.4 billion after the carbon tax increases again in, like, a few days and given that the government is taking Albertans' money from one pocket and resending a portion of it back into the same pocket, Minister, how does this sleight-of-hand manoeuvre possibly allow you to claim that your government has the backs of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the rebate system is being administered by the Canada Revenue Agency, and the Minister of Finance did confirm at estimates debate, if the member was paying attention, that it's about \$1.5 million. Now, the question before us is not about whether we have a price on carbon; it's about what kind of plan we have. The position that we've taken as a government is that it's going to be a made-in-Alberta plan that moves our energy industry forward. It won't be a plan that's made in Ottawa. I know that Mr. Kenney is very fond of Ottawa, but on this side of the House we're going to be standing up for Albertans.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It took me two questions to get an answer.

Given that as of January 1, which is just around the corner, the carbon tax on diesel will increase to 8.03 cents per litre and given that a constituent of mine has told me that this NDP's unfair carbon tax is costing his trucking company almost \$3,000 per month and he's not getting anything back from this government, Minister, why is this government taking money from families and businesses who could better use it now to reinvest in their businesses and in their children's futures?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we have recycled carbon levy revenues back into reducing the small-business rate by a third. Certainly, that represents about \$180 million worth of benefit to our small businesses. If you're a couple who makes less than \$95,000, you are getting a \$450 rebate. That will increase to \$540. Low-income seniors in Alberta are getting a \$300 carbon levy rebate. That is in addition to a number of energy efficiency programs and a made-in-Alberta plan that got us two pipeline approvals, not a made-in-Ottawa plan.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have a request for unanimous consent to introduce guests who have arrived.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives of the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta. The IBAA is a nonprofit association representing over 4,200 members in 250 brokerages across the provinces and territories. We have with us this afternoon Gerry Baert from Blue Circle Insurance Brokers in Calgary, Ken Holst from Saunders Insurance in Taber, Mitch Holst from Saunders Insurance in Taber, Jonathan Brown from Peters Insurance in Wetaskiwin, Scott Romans from Ing & McKee Insurance in Red Deer, Jody Lohr from Blue Circle Insurance Brokers in Calgary, and we have George Hodgson and Rikki McBride from the Insurance Brokers Association Alberta proper and, finally, Chad Leibel from Leibel Insurance Group here in Edmonton. These folks are at the Legislature to meet with the MLAs and to advocate for the insurance industry and their clients. Having worked in insurance myself, I know the critical work insurance agents and brokers do to manage risk and to help make life better and more secure for all of us. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Alberta Real Estate Association

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to you about an industry and an organization in which I am proud to have served. Prior to being elected as the MLA for Edmonton-McClung, I had a 30-year career in real estate and was a proud member of the Alberta Real Estate Association. Seated here in the gallery today are 48 members from that same association attending their annual Government Liaison Days conference.

The Alberta Real Estate Association was incorporated on February 11, 1947. Then, as now, property ownership is one of the cornerstones of the high-quality life that Albertans enjoy. As their part in maintaining that quality of life, the Alberta Real Estate Association provides professional development for their realtor members as well as advocates on behalf of their membership to ensure that industry professionals are able to serve the Alberta public effectively. They advocate for realtors and their clients on issues like land transfer taxes, the land titles registry system, standards for home and property inspections, marijuana grow op remediation, and Alberta's Condominium Property Act regulations. In fact, the association was an important contributor to the recent consultations on the Condominium Property Act and age-restricted condos.

The Alberta Real Estate Association is a valued and constructive stakeholder on government issues related to real estate in Alberta. I know because I've been on both sides of the equation as a property owner and as a realtor. The Alberta Real Estate Association and the Alberta government share the same desire to protect and promote the interests of Albertans by making sure that there are rules and guidelines in place to help make significant real estate decisions, like purchasing a home or selling a subdivision, easier and trouble free.

I hope you'll all join me in congratulating the Alberta Real Estate Association and its member realtors for 70 years of dedicated service to our province and its people.

Rural Cellphone Service

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, recently the *Western Producer* ran a story on rural cellphone coverage, and the picture they painted was condemning. It found that many developing nations have better cell coverage at a lower cost. Another study conducted by the think tank New America found that when it comes to voice service, Canada was the most expensive on the planet. The sad part is that many of my constituents would gladly pay the outrageous fees if they were just able to get even half-decent service. Unfortunately, outside of the major centres cell coverage is spotty at best. The *Western Producer* found that even along the Trans-Canada highway there are extended dead zone pockets.

The issue isn't about rural Albertans having the same luxury as our urban neighbours. This is quickly becoming a serious health and safety issue. When someone has an accident on one of Alberta's many gravel roads and no one else is around, it is critical that when they take out their cellphone to call 911, they actually have service.

When it comes to notifying Albertans of potential or ongoing disasters in their area, Alberta has an established alert service, which pushes out important information. Unfortunately, in many places there simply isn't any Internet or cell coverage through which you can receive these important and often life-saving alerts. Alarming, during the recent wildfires that tore through my constituency, many people were caught completely off guard due to the lack of Internet and cell coverage. They may as well have been on the moon.

As we have all heard loud and clear yesterday, rural crime is a growing problem, and often the police are hours or even days away. In fact, the issue is even worse since in many areas of rural Alberta you don't have the cell coverage to make 911 calls anyway. This is a serious problem that needs attention now.

Instead of capping oil sands development, unionizing family farms, or establishing a job-killing carbon tax, this government should be working with the telecommunication industry through its regulatory and legislative tools to improve basic service in rural Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, when disaster strikes, help should be just a text away. [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member. [interjection] Hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Pediatric Neuropsychiatric Disorders

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 9, 2017, our government declared it pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders associated with streptococcal infections, also known as PANDAS, and pediatric acute-onset neuropsychiatric syndrome, or PANS, awareness day in Alberta. I'm wearing the PANDAS shirt in honour of this member's statement.

This happened after two of my constituents, Marnie and Richard Deschenes, brought to my attention that their two sons were diagnosed with PANDAS. The Deschenes struggled for a long time to have their first son appropriately diagnosed after a sudden-onset mental illness. The Deschenes have organized a group of Albertans to spread awareness among patients, parents, physicians, and community members about PANDAS and PANS. The group meets in Calgary regularly. I was happy to not only help facilitate a declaration to bring awareness to PANDAS and PANS but to also do a member's statement in order to raise more awareness as this is not a well-known disorder.

2:50

PANDAS occurs when streptococcal, or strep, bacteria triggers a misdirected immune response resulting in inflammation of a child's brain. The child quickly begins to exhibit life-changing symptoms such as obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, tics, personality changes, decline in math and handwriting abilities, sensory sensitivities, restrictive eating, and more. PANS has the same symptoms, but there is no associated infection. We need to continue to take steps in promoting awareness to help ensure children receive a timely diagnosis and treatment.

Supporting the mental health of Albertans is something our government takes very seriously. Our government is committed to helping all Albertans. That includes those with multiple and complex needs such as children diagnosed with PANDAS and PANS and those who love and care for them. I would like to thank the Deschenes family for bringing this to my attention.

Thank you very much.

George Frederick John Gosbee

Mrs. Aheer: George Frederick John Gosbee left us on November 12, 2017, at the age of 48 years. George was born in Kingston, Ontario, on August 30, 1969. He and his family moved to Calgary, where he would go to school, start a family and a business, and touch the lives of many. The brevity of George's life is no indication of its vibrancy. No matter the endeavour, George approached it with gifted resoluteness and inspiring curiosity. When not sporting a suit and tie in downtown Calgary, George was an avid mountaineer, a practising yogi, philanthropist, and, above all, a loving father, husband, son, and brother. George's abrupt end affects many around the globe. He considered himself to be an international world traveller who embodied the three-pillared philosophy of explore, experience, and educate. His legacy and benevolent relationships he leaves behind are a testament of his character.

Prior to founding AltaCorp Capital in 2010, George was the chairman, president, and CEO of Tristone Capital Global Inc. As a corporate, financial, and philanthropic leader his accolades include vice-chair of Alberta Investment Management, chair of Arcadia Biosciences, co-owner of the Arizona Coyotes, alternate governor of the NHL, chair of the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, adviser to the Haskayne School of Business, director of the Chrysler Group, member of the economic advisory council for the present Prime Minister, and positions on numerous other organizations.

George will be remembered dearly by his wife, Karen; their three children, Carter, John, and Isla; his parents, John and Edna Gosbee; sister and brother-in-law Jean and Trevor Marks and their three children, Ty, Jessica, and Tayden; along with countless other family and friends he has touched. He was a gifted visionary, a pillar in the community, a philanthropist, a force of nature, a leader, a man of compassion and energy, a hockey fan, a motivator, and a dear friend. George left a giant hole in our lives and hearts when he left us far too soon.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present – as I noticed in the introduction of the AWA and their advocacy for caribou, we passed off over 300 postcards with a statement to the Premier. “Wild caribou belong in Alberta, not just on

our quarters.” That is our money. “Protect Alberta’s caribou habitat now!”

In addition, there were five specific ones I wanted to mention, including one from Abigail Hadden in Calgary: caribou need a home, too. And from Treaty 6, Crystal Lamamen: caribou mitigation, conservation, and protection fall within the body of inherent treaty rights, original peoples of the land, as long as the sun shines, grass grows, and the rivers flow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four letters here from concerned constituents regarding rural crime. This one is from Edie, who says: “We clearly are not winning the battle over rural crime.” She’s seen a significant increase in her area.

This one is from Melvin and his family: we feel like we are the “victims with no voice or provision to protect ourselves in our community.”

This one is from Fern in Red Deer county. Her son has had his truck stolen twice, and her neighbours had their truck stolen from the field where they were combining.

This one is from Tara from Red Deer county. She’s a working parent and leaves her teenage son home alone until she gets home after work to their acreage, and she is desperately afraid for their safety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have three letters. One is from 75-year-old Mildred, where she lists all of the personal irreplaceable items that have been stolen from her in the last six months.

The second letter is from Trevor, who states that he’s been broken into five times between July and October of this year. Five times. In one he had a bush camera set up where they took pictures of the guys loading rifles as they came onto his property.

The third letter is from Connie, and I’ll just read a couple of statements that she makes. She says that she’s grandmother. She says: “I’m angry that I have to worry about self-defence in my own [house]. I’m angry that my peace of mind has been stolen. I’m angry that criminals have more rights than their victims.”

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Table the document. [interjection] Hon. member. [interjections] Members.

Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table today documents containing a petition of over a thousand signatures presented by Grant Ferby, a long-time fisherman in Alberta. The title of it is Save a Perch. It says:

Together, with the support of the Beaver River Fish & Game Association, we are requesting the ESRD of Alberta to initiate an enhanced cormorant control program in the Lakeland area. Our goal is to reduce the number of cormorant colonies in the Lakeland to help restore our fisheries. Our yellow perch fishery has been decimated over the last 25 years due in large part to the increased cormorant population. It is estimated that the current Muriel Lake cormorant population alone removes one million lbs of fish per year from our local lakes.

I have five copies of that.

The Speaker: You have another?

Mr. Loewen: Yes. I also have the appropriate five copies of some maps regarding the boundaries commission and how the boundaries could have been redrawn simpler to fit in the parameters of the populations that the boundaries commission was set with.

The Speaker: Any others? The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies here of a tabling in regard to comments in my question that the Premier asked me to do a tabling on in regard to her interview earlier today on CBC and her comments to a gentleman named Norm that I spoke about in which clearly the Premier disregards Norm’s comments about what the carbon tax is costing and even implies . . .

The Speaker: Come on, hon. member. Table the document. [interjection] Hon. member, excuse me. When I say, “Table the document,” that means you stop talking when I stand up and please sit down. Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it’s my job to speak for my constituents, and you can’t stop me.

The Speaker: Excuse me. Could I ask that you rise and apologize for that last comment.

Mr. Nixon: I apologize for the comment.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I believe that we had a point of order, but it was withdrawn.

3:00

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

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I’d like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 29 An Act to Reduce Cannabis and Alcohol Impaired Driving

The Chair: We are considering amendment A2. Are there any further speakers to this amendment?

Mr. McIver: This is the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-West?

The Chair: Calgary-West. This is the amendment.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. All right. I’m grateful for you making that clear. Thank you.

The Chair: I’ll recognize you to speak. Did you wish to speak to it, hon. member?

Mr. McIver: No. I already did.

The Chair: Okay. Any other members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. Just to confirm, this is the amendment to Bill 29?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Yes. Perfect.

I just wanted to, you know, stand up and speak in support of the amendment. There are a couple of things. This is brand new legislation that's coming out. It's new law coming from our federal government. It hasn't really been tested anywhere other than a couple of the states down in the U.S. and over in Europe, in Amsterdam, where it's legal there. Again, it is certainly new to us, and I think that putting a clause in there where this legislation has to be reviewed – I think the private sector, when they realize the potential here, if you come up with a testing device or some sort of testing that can prove impairment by marijuana, the wheels are probably turning already out there. I think that in the very near future we may see something that could substantially change this legislation, so I really think that it is imperative that we put a clause in there that gives us the option to reinvestigate this at the end of 2019 and then every five years after that.

For that reason I will be supporting this, and I think that everybody else should as well. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A2?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question? [interjections] We're on Bill 29, yes. We're back on the main bill. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Madam Chair, while our friends across the hall sort things out, I just want to take a little time to talk about what a wonderful bill this is, and I hope that if there are further amendments, they will be forthcoming shortly. I think it's important to move ahead with this bill. I think we know that the pressure from the decisions of the federal government is bearing down upon us all, and it's incumbent on all of us to do our utmost to make sure that we are taking every step possible to protect the lives and safety of the people who are travelling on our roads.

That's one of the things that we've been trying to do in this particular piece of legislation. It reflects changes to the Criminal Code that are being proposed by the federal government and also conforms with the decision of the Alberta Court of Appeal which struck down a section of our Traffic Safety Act as it related to the length of suspensions under the act. We are required to bring forward these changes in order to do that.

With that, just a little reminder of the wonderful virtues of this bill, which I know has been supported by the Alberta Motor Transport Association and by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, so I commend it to all members of the House.

The Chair: Questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, I'd like to focus on one of the press releases that the Alberta government or the NDP brought out. The press release is regarding Drugged Driving is Impaired Driving. It's August 5, 2016, so this was an older press release. We just heard the Minister of Transportation speak on the importance of this, and I have to agree that impaired driving is something that we all need to be very cognizant of. The quote that the hon. minister has put forward in this press release:

It comes as a surprise to many people that drunk driving and drugged driving carry the same criminal charges. This is because both substances impair a driver's ability and increase the likelihood of being involved in a collision.

That seems pretty self-explanatory. If you have impairment, you shouldn't drive. I think that everybody can get that lesson in life, saying that it doesn't matter what it is that you are doing; if you are planning on taking a vehicle and going out into the public, you need to be very clear that you are one hundred per cent in charge of that wonderful vehicle.

Now, just below the minister's quote is a quote from Andrew Murie, the CEO of MADD Canada.

Impaired driving is Canada's leading cause of criminal death in Canada. The number of drugs present in motor vehicle fatalities in Canada continues to grow. It is absolutely essential that when you are using drugs that you not drive and create that risk of death or injury to yourself or others.

Again, this is common-sense stuff. We should be making sure that people do not go out and drink and drive or be drugged and drive. When we hear some of the facts – and there are some facts here that we need to be very cognizant of, saying that these are important.

Now, the last time I spoke in second reading, I brought some important Stats Canada research that came forward, and one of the Stats Canada research is called Police-reported Crime Statistics in Canada, 2015.

Drug offences involving cannabis continued to decline in 2015.

In total, the overall rate of police-reported offences involving the possession, trafficking, production and distribution of cannabis decreased 15% between 2014 and 2015.

This is something that is important because I believe that a lot of our enforcement are starting to see that cannabis is something that's important that we keep out of children's hands, but with the change of government we're starting to see that the Trudeau Liberals are more cannabis friendly, so we're seeing a decrease in drug offences happening here.

What's important here is it says that "in contrast, offences involving the possession, trafficking, production or distribution of methamphetamines grew 25%." We're seeing that maybe people are moving away from cannabis and maybe potentially moving towards some of these really bad drugs, so what is it that we need to be continuing to be cognizant of here? We need to be very clear that driving under the influence of any drug, whether it's alcohol, whether it's cannabis or it is some other drug, is not okay.

3:10

Now, going further, almost all police-reported impaired driving incidents continued to involve alcohol in 2014 at 96 per cent while a small portion of 4 per cent involved drugs. I would say that when we start to legalize marijuana or cannabis, we're going to see that this number should spike, but it's not going to spike. The reason that it's not going to spike significantly is because we have no way to test for this drug, no way to test for impairment of this drug. It is important to understand that in the end we need to be always moving forward with being able to bring these impaired drivers off the road. If we go back to MADD and our hon. Minister of Transportation, it's common sense. It is common sense in the fact that we need to make sure that these individuals are not on the roads. I have a hard time making it from point A to B here.

Right now we're at a place where we can't test for this drug. We're going to legalize it, which means we're putting people behind the wheel potentially that could hurt Albertans. Now, blaming the NDP for the fact that our federal Liberal colleagues are bringing through or ramming through legislation at an alarming rate without preparing our provinces – it's not their fault. I can

understand that. But I will tell you that what we do need to do is make sure that if we have no way of testing for this, then we need to start looking at a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to our roads. We need to start saying that until we can test for cannabis in a way that prevents impaired driving, we are not going to allow people on the road who are utilizing this drug. It may be legal, absolutely. The federal Liberals are pushing us in this direction, but in the end we need to maintain safe work sites, we need to make sure our roads are safe, and we need to make sure it doesn't get into the hands of our children.

Now, I'm just going to go through some more of this press release that was done on August 5, 2016, because there are some interesting facts here when it comes to impaired driving.

- The Traffic Injury Research Foundation determined that in Canada during 2012, drugs were detected in 40 per cent of fatally injured drivers.

Forty per cent. So when we start looking at the fact that Canada has a real problem already when it comes to impaired driving causing fatalities, why would we add a new drug that we can't test for and allow for people to be able to drive under the influence? This is not okay. This is one of the flaws that we have when it comes to this bill. We need to be making sure that Albertans are safe on the roads. We need to make sure that Albertans are safe on job sites. That's why it's so important that we start doing some research into making sure that we have the appropriate test.

Now, I hear that the test right now is more or less going to revolve around sobriety tests. Well, fair enough. So now we're bringing back walk the line and touch your nose, that kind of stuff. I believe that we moved away from sobriety tests because they were largely subjective, and what happens is that people are able to do a lot of things when they're under the influence of drugs that a normal person may or may not be able to do. When we start to look at the fact that sobriety tests are more likely to be challenged in court and the fact that our officers haven't pursued sobriety tests for a number of years, we're actually going to have a long period of time where people are going to be able to be caught underneath this impairment and then get away with it when it hits the courts.

As we have heard, the government so far hasn't been so good at rural crime. Now let's add impaired driving into that.

Now, let's talk about the next impaired driving facts.

- Alberta is slightly above the national average at 41 per cent. This represents 82 drivers who were killed in collisions during 2012 who tested positive for drugs. For perspective, 71 fatally injured drivers tested positive for alcohol during that same year. Of those, 34 had both alcohol and drugs in their system.

We're seeing some very large numbers here that are already proving impairment when it comes to drugs. What we're seeing here is a group of Albertans who have decided to put others at risk. This is something that is not acceptable, and we need to address the fact that we cannot prevent these people from going onto the roads. We have no way of testing, no way of making sure that our roads are safe. Now, I do again sympathize with the current NDP government because this is something that is being rammed down our throats. There is no doubt about it.

Now, another point that's brought up here:

- Mixing alcohol and drugs of any sort is also a concern. Combining impairing substances has major risks. Always use substances responsibly.

It could be that they are just underneath the legal limit for alcohol, but they also have cannabis, or THC, within their blood. What we're saying here is: is that person legally impaired or not? We don't know, because we don't know how the two drugs interact with each other within a person's system. We do know that there is an effect

on those people's systems. So we need to be making sure that we not only are testing for cannabis within the individual who's potentially impaired, but we also need to be making sure that the combination of drugs is not impairing them even though they're below the levels that have been prescribed by the government.

Here's the next point.

- Studies of driving performance (both simulated and on-road) show increased likelihood to swerve, following distance, and speed as a function of cannabis use.

What I am reading into this is that cannabis use affects your response time. I don't know if anybody would disagree that cannabis or, in many cases, alcohol is preventing your ability to be able to swerve if that child gets in front of you or if that family pet is in front of you. What happens here is that we've put somebody at real risk, and it's all because we can't get that person off the road.

Now, in the case of my constituency – and I will go back to my constituency – I had a couple come into my constituency office. They were a family driving to Edmonton, actually to Fort Saskatchewan. This couple was hit head-on by an individual who was impaired by drugs and, I believe, alcohol. In this tragic situation what we've got here is that their family was in this terrible accident, but they also lost the individual's mother. So a person died. There was a fatality. This woman was a statistic within the 2016 year. This is tragic, and nobody wants to hear this. I'm not blaming anybody on this other than that individual that got behind the wheel and decided he was going to drive impaired.

Now, let's say that that individual had been pulled off along the side of the road by an officer. He had the THC in his blood, and he was impaired, but we have no way of being able to remove him from the road. That accident still would have happened, cause and effect. Cause and effect. What we're looking at here is an individual we could not prevent from the actual fatality. Now, at some point as a government we need to acknowledge that we have a responsibility to take that individual off the road.

Let's say, for instance, that this individual had been pulled over, had been given a sobriety test by that officer, that that person passed that sobriety test, like we had described before, that the officer – obviously, this is a very subjective test – decided that that individual was okay to drive. Then let's say that half an hour's drive down the road that person runs into a family and that somebody is a fatality at that point. The question is: is the Alberta government liable for that? Is this something where we are putting our province at a particularly large chance of liability payments coming out of the Alberta government?

3:20

Is this something that we could have prevented but didn't? Now, I'm not questioning an RCMP officer or a peace officer, questioning the decision they made at that time, because – you know what? – unless you're that officer, it is too hard to know what's happening with that individual. But I can tell you that with that person hitting that family, causing the death of a loved one, us then finding out that there was THC in the blood and that maybe this death could have been prevented had we had a better testing system: that is the true question here.

If this is something that we can actually bring forward, that is a fault within the Alberta government system, are we looking at a whole lot of lawsuits? When we start looking at this – they said that 41 per cent of the national average are fatalities due to drugs detected in their systems – are we opening up a class-action suit against our province because we jumped too quickly at this? Is this something where, in the end, we should have slowed down?

Again, it's important to say that zero tolerance when it comes to marijuana, when it comes to our roadways I think is something that we need to consider.

Now, my colleague put forward a sunset clause, and it's shameful that this Assembly voted that down, specifically the government. In the end, what we need to be doing is reviewing these important pieces of legislation and then updating them. I would say that the fact that we don't have a good way of testing should automatically trigger the need for a sunset clause to this legislation. We should be reviewing this. You know what? My colleague put it at five years; I would put it at two, not five. Two years. We need to be making sure that this law is more or less protecting our residents.

What we're looking at here is Bill 29, An Act to Reduce Cannabis and Alcohol Impaired Driving. That's admirable. The act is named that. But what we need to be looking at here is an act that actually prevents deaths if it's possible. I don't see that in this act. This is not something where we can say that this act is acting responsibly to protect our roadways. We need to address the fact that there could be impaired people driving on our streets, putting our families – my children, my parents, my brother and sister, my nieces, everybody that I know – at risk just because we can't get this right in the fact that we have no way of ensuring that a person who is impaired gets off the streets. This is critical.

We need to have a way of testing. If we can't test, this shouldn't be moving forward. I will say that when it comes to our government, it does seem that we are moving a little fast in this direction. But, again, I don't think that it's something that can be prevented as this is being brought forward by the Trudeau Liberals.

Now, from that survey, the impaired driving facts:

- In the 2014 driver . . . survey, seven in 10 Albertans agreed that too many people are driving under the influence of legal or illegal drugs.

Again, this is a government press release. So we have a very large portion of Albertans already saying, back in 2014, that there are a lot of people already doing this, driving under the influence. This is shameful, but this is something that we are going to see jump very, very sharply as soon as we legalize cannabis within our province, and it is going to be even larger once we can't test for it and get it off the roads.

The next point:

- The 2014 Driver Attitude Survey also noted only 55 per cent of Albertans make other driving arrangements when they have taken drugs which can affect their ability to drive.

People think of drugs differently than alcohol – this is important – whether it's prescription drugs or methamphetamines, opioids. What we've got here are people that are saying: I am okay to drive . . . [Mr. Cyr's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to correct a couple of things with regard to that. The hon. member talks about the lack of a test for THC. He doesn't, I don't think, quite have it right. What we have are roadside screening devices that are still under evaluation. There is a test for the per se limits of two and five nanograms set forth in the amendments to the Criminal Code, and that's a blood test, and that is accurate, you know, for measuring the quantity of THC in the blood. It doesn't measure impairment, but it measures the amount of THC in the blood and can do so quite accurately.

The question is on roadside screening devices; for example, the breathalyzer. If an officer suspects that you've been drinking, he gives you a screening device to blow into. It's not sufficient to

determine your blood-alcohol content, but it does detect, with a certain degree of accuracy, that you have consumed alcohol in a certain amount. Then you're taken down to the station or to the on-site station that they've set up for a breathalyzer, which is a similar device but much more accurate, that is then used in order to lay a charge.

We have that for cannabis, and that is the blood test, but the roadside screening device to detect the presence of THC is still under evaluation.

I do have a little bit more information with respect to that. If I can maybe take a minute to read that. Oral fluid drug screeners are devices that are able to detect the presence of some kinds of drugs in saliva, including THC, the main impairing component in cannabis. The device is inserted into the mouth of a driver, and once saliva is collected, the device indicates the presence or absence of drugs. These devices are fast, noninvasive, and accurate. Bill C-46 proposes legislation that will authorize police to use an oral fluid screener at a roadside if they suspect a driver has a drug in their body.

The government of Canada is in the process of reviewing roadside testing devices for use in Canada. Once roadside testing devices are approved, should a driver test positive for the presence of a particular drug on such a device, the blood test will also be taken to show whether the level in the blood is over the new limits in the proposed act.

At present oral fluid screening devices have not been approved for use in Canada. The Drugs and Driving Committee of the Canadian Society of Forensic Science has recently examined the performance of oral fluid screening devices and determined that they have an acceptable degree of accuracy in the detection of cannabis, methamphetamine, cocaine, and opioids, some of the major drugs of concern to road safety. These screeners will be evaluated by the federal Drugs and Driving Committee and approved by the Attorney General of Canada.

While it's not a hundred per cent certain, it looks like we are well on the way to approving a roadside screening device for THC. The federal government has indicated to us that they fully expect that one will be approved for use in Canada prior to the proclamation of the changes to the Criminal Code.

I just wanted to set those things on the record. There are tests for THC levels. They have set out per se limits of two and five nanograms. That is not definitively established as impairment in all drivers. That part of the science is still a work-in-progress, I guess you could say. But, in actual fact, I think we're well on the way to being able to detect cannabis at the roadside, and we already have the ability to measure the concentration of THC in the blood.

3:30

The Chair: Hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, you wish to speak to the bill?

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an opportunity for me today to address Bill 29. I wanted to just relate a couple of specific areas of concern that I have with regard to the bill, and, you know, as we're moving through the committee stage, we can address these. But I do want to back up just a little bit to give some of the reference or at least my frame of reference with regard to impaired driving in general, whether that impairment is due to alcohol or, in the case that we're discussing today, alcohol and drugs.

Last Thursday the Member for Edmonton-McClung told the Chamber about his brother Kevin. Kevin was my grad class president. The Member for Edmonton-McClung and I both attended Queen Elizabeth high school here in Edmonton. He was two years ahead of me, in my sister's class, and he was grad class president of

my sister's class. Then two years later I actually ran against Kevin. I'm not sure if you even knew that. I ran against him. He trounced me thoroughly in the election for grad class president, but we were friends in high school.

As was related by the Member for Edmonton-McClung, tragically Kevin's life along with two other young women, who were attending Lakeland College in Vermilion – it's ironic that I would eventually end up representing that institution in my constituency. Kevin was attending Lakeland College along with two other women, and they were travelling back to Lakeland College before highway 16 was twinned. A drunk driver came across the road, and in a head-on collision all three young people were killed. Our first high school reunion happened about three months after we left high school. It was at Kevin's funeral. I can tell you that that experience had a profound effect on my view towards the whole question of impairment and driving. I appreciate my colleague bringing up the question of his brother, and he really honoured Kevin in what he said.

It would be 30 years later, in the middle of the night in May, that I received a phone call from some good friends of ours, and in a stammering voice I heard the voice of a good friend who said: "The RCMP are here along with victims' services. They've just told us that Devin has been killed in a car accident." Now, who was Devin? Well, Devin Racz was a speed skater that I had the privilege of coaching for a number of years. He was my son's best friend. In addition to being an outstanding speed skater, Devin was also an outstanding high school football player, and that was sort of a combination of athletic pursuits that was unusual. You had the big, tough football player, and then you had also the guy who wore a spandex outfit and 18-inch-long, razor-sharp blades and could skate like the wind. That was Devin Racz. After graduating from high school, Devin returned, and he helped me coach at our speed skating club in Lloydminster.

While returning to Lloydminster from a concert in Saskatoon, a drunk driver came across the road and struck Devin in his truck head-on. Devin was killed, and Devin's sister Melissa was very badly injured. Thankfully, she has recovered since then. For the next week I worked with Devin's mom and dad to help arrange Devin's funeral, to help the mourning process in our community because Devin was a very popular young man. He was very well known as one of the captains of the football team and very popular amongst speed skaters as a coach that everybody loved. Over 1,200 people were at Devin's memorial service.

That's the kind of carnage that drunk driving has caused in Canada. Sadly, despite the best efforts of organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving and other organizations the message is still not fully getting through. Canada, especially western Canada, has some of the highest levels of impaired driving anywhere on the planet, and it's completely unacceptable. Taking the wheel of your vehicle after you have had too much to drink is an act of supreme selfishness, and it reflects a wanton disregard for not only your own safety but the safety of others on the road. Too many families in Canada, too many families in Alberta have had to endure the heartache and the suffering that have been suffered by the Dach family, by the Racz family, and by so many others.

Understandably, Albertans are concerned that now there's another substance that we know causes impairment that is going to be legal. We know that on July 1 cannabis will be a legal substance in Canada, and we also know that cannabis affects your ability to do things in a way that requires split-second decision-making and fine motor skills. I would not want a surgeon who was impaired by cannabis doing an operation on me. I would not want a backhoe operator digging around gas lines and power lines who was

impaired by cannabis in doing that operation. But as of July 1 it will be quite legal in Canada for people to recreationally use cannabis. Now, we can debate whether we are in agreement with that position or not. I think that that's obviously a debate – in fact, we have another bill that we are discussing that in.

But when it comes to the operation of a motor vehicle, that is potentially the most lethal weapon that anyone is allowed to operate, we don't yet have good, strong guidelines for exactly what constitutes impairment. Unlike alcohol, which is rapidly metabolized in the body and has a linear destabilization curve in the body, THC and cannabinoids do not. I have considerable concern as to how we are going to make those assessments.

Now, I know that there's work being done, and I'm glad that there's work being done. I'm a little bit concerned that we are first throwing the doors wide open and then trying to figure out how we're going to regulate all this, but that's the hand that we've been dealt. I'm glad to hear the Transportation minister when he says that there is work that is going to be ongoing. I certainly encourage the government to leave the doors open on this issue to make sure that we can continue to have the kinds of regulations and legislation put in place to make sure that this happens.

You know, back in 2012 the government that I was part of introduced a lower restriction, .05, for alcohol impairment, 50 milligrams per 100 milliliters of blood. It was vehemently opposed by the opposition party of the day. I remember being asked about it, and I told some folks in a group that was very much opposed to the .05 limit about Kevin and Devin and that if they were looking for someone who was going to advocate for more lax regulations for impaired driving, they were talking to the wrong person, that I would never advocate on behalf of more lax regulations.

In this regard, I am concerned, as I know many Albertans are concerned, that come July 1, we are going to see an increase in the number of drivers who are impaired by a substance which unfortunately – and the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake is quite correct. Sadly, there's an impression, a false impression, that while alcohol certainly causes impairment, the consumption of cannabis does not. I've even had some people try to tell me that they're better drivers after they've consumed cannabis. [interjections] You know, I hear some laughing over there. It's not a laughing matter. That's part of the public education process that has to go on. You know, I'm very concerned that we will see more drivers who are operating motor vehicles, one of the most dangerous things that you can do to public safety, under an impaired situation after July 1 of next year than we currently have now, and that, quite frankly, is the last thing we need to have happen.

3:40

I mean, overall, motor vehicle accident rates are on the decline. Certainly, fatality rates and major injury rates are on the decline, and those are positive things. There are a lot of factors involved. One of them is that our vehicles are safer than they used to be. You know, with some of the advancements in technology, our vehicles are safer, but the wild card in so many fatal and injury-causing collisions is the driver. If the driver is impaired, if the driver does not have the motor skills and the ability to make the kinds of split-second decisions that have to be made in the operation of a motor vehicle, then there's a problem.

From my standpoint and speaking certainly from my, you know, past experience with these two young men, these two young men who had tremendous promise, both of them, these two young men who would have been leaders and already were leaders in their peer group and would have become great leaders, because of them I will always be a very staunch advocate in favour of any additional

restrictions to reduce the incidence of impaired driving, whether that be by cannabis, by alcohol, or by any other substance.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Other members wishing to speak? Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. Pleased to add my comments to this very important piece of legislation, that has been obviously accelerated as a result of the federal decision to legalize cannabis, a decision I support. Clearly, it has risks. Clearly, it has caused lots of suffering already, especially in young brains. Clearly, too, we have to come to terms with it, as we have had to come to terms with other substances that alter our mental capacity and alter mood. We're moving ahead into this brave new world.

I think I want to recognize that the government is putting forward some reasonable legislation, apart from my concern still that the age at which it should be legalized should be raised. My colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster has alluded to the fact that young people are more vulnerable, certainly, behind a wheel, where they have limited experience, using substances that they have limited experience with and being subject to peer pressure in a way that other age groups are not. I don't think we should be following the federal guideline of 18. I think we should set our own standard.

Given that the research on the young developing brain and the impacts of cannabis – there's still a lot of mystery. There are still a lot of unknowns around the impact on motor control, on judgment, on executive functions, on attention, and the tremendous variability in the young developing brain. Quite frankly, the male brain – it's clear from the research I've read – developmentally is slower than the female brain. Therefore, there is more concern about an 18-year-old male than there is about an 18-year-old female, but we can't distinguish those in terms of our legislation. They have to go together, and frankly it'll be safer for both males and females with an older age range.

The Canadian Medical Association has suggested 25. I don't think that's realistic, frankly. If the rest of the country is using 18 or 21, I think the best we can do is to push it to 21. That's three years of maturing, three years of experience with some degree of alcohol exposure and, hopefully, a recognition, both through educational and through life experience, that this combination of alcohol and cannabis is absolutely lethal for the young brain in terms of its ability to judge and to make sound decisions.

Bill 29 proposes to amend the Traffic Safety Act to comply with the May 18, 2017, Alberta Court of Appeal ruling that found it unconstitutional for the province to impose an indefinite licence suspension on a person that is charged with an impaired driving offence. The court gave the Alberta government until May 2018 to fix the legislation. That was the result of the previous government's attempts to try to be very, very clear and strong about reducing the carnage related to alcohol. Now we're going to have to amend that. That's fine. I think this is appropriate given the constitutional challenge.

The bill also updates the Traffic Safety Act to reflect the impending legalization, as I mentioned, pursuant to Bill C-46, specific to cannabis, cannabis-alcohol combination, and other combinations of drugs. People charged with impaired driving in Alberta will now face a 90-day licence suspension. Once that period is complete, drivers can get their licence back if they join the ignition interlock program for a year. That was a decision of the previous government that I supported.

This bill imposes expanded provincial administrative sanctions for drivers with a blood drug concentration or drug-alcohol combination over the new criminal limits proposed by the federal

government in Bill C-46. The sanctions will be the same as those imposed on drivers suspected of being criminally impaired by alcohol. This bill adds impairment by cannabis, cannabis-alcohol, and other illegal drugs to the zero-tolerance rules for new drivers in the graduated licence program.

Parenthetically, there are a lot of medications out there now that are going to add to impairment: psychotropics, sedatives, hypnotics, drugs that many, many Canadians are taking for other reasons. This really requires a tremendous amount of, I guess, preparation of our police to be able to assess impairment quite apart from our ability to measure it in breath or blood. We're going to rely heavily on our police force to assess impairment by behavioural means and observation. That's going to be a challenge, but given the cocktails that are out there and that many people are using for important medical purposes as well as for recreational purposes, we have to be, I guess, recognizing that we're putting a lot of onus on our police force.

Just for the record, over the 10 years from 2006 to 2015, 1,000 people died in Alberta, approximately 100 per year, as a result of alcohol- or drug-impaired driving, and 15,000 people were injured. The ratio of deaths to injuries is staggering. The costs to our health care system, to our productivity, to our family life, to our employment are staggering. Mixing alcohol and drugs such as cannabis results in significantly increased impairment. In 2013, the last date that I have data for, 24 per cent of fatally injured drivers tested positive in lab tests for both alcohol and drugs, so about one-quarter of those fatalities were associated with a mixture.

Under Bill C-46 drivers will now face a maximum \$1,000 fine if their blood tests positive for 2 to 5 nanograms of THC per millilitre of blood, the main psychoactive compound in cannabis. For drivers with more than 5 nanograms per millilitre of THC on a first impaired driving a minimum of \$1,000 will be imposed, with increasingly harsh penalties such as jail time for subsequent offences. We can debate the rigour or the severity of these consequences, but there's no question that we need to send a strong message with any levels of impairment. The rules also impose penalties for combined alcohol-cannabis use of 2.5 nanograms per millilitre of THC with a blood alcohol of .05.

I guess I stand, Madam Chair, in general support of this bill.

I do hope that the government will seriously look at the legal age of use of cannabis. I think that we could set our own standard here; we don't need to follow the federal standard or that of our neighbours. I do caution that there is a tremendous lack of research on the young, developing brain and the use of cannabis. We're sending a certain message, I guess, to young people if we legalize it at a certain age, suggesting that we believe that people under the age of 18, in this case, have the maturity to decide not only whether or not to use the substance and the substance perhaps in combination with another substance that we know to be risking injury and death, but we are also saying that we believe that at 18 these individuals understand the consequences and can perceive, have the insight, have the personal maturity to see and recognize the risks that they're taking. I don't believe that's appropriate at a time when we are, if anything, seeing research that indicates that under the age of 25, certainly under the age of 21, young people are going to be at risk of having not only some significant impairment but are at risk of not recognizing the potential for addiction, the potential for this being a gateway to some other inappropriate drugs and risky behaviour.

3:50

Again, I guess I would remind the government that when we get to the other bill on legalizing cannabis, we look at the age and get the best possible research at the time because I know it's ongoing

and there are new studies being reported almost weekly in the literature about some of these extra risk factors associated with younger brains and cannabis.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the words from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I certainly recognize his long work and expertise in the medical field and certainly respect his thoughts and his opinions on this. Though I recognize that, indeed, on this bill we're not specifically debating the question of age of access, though it does come into some of the discussion here, I did just want to respond to some of his remarks.

I can certainly appreciate the concerns he brings forward regarding, I guess, youth access, but I would note that in Canada we already have one of the highest rates of youth access to cannabis and usage of cannabis in the world. This isn't a question, I think, where if we set a higher age limit, that's suddenly going to disappear or that's necessarily even going to reduce that amount. Under the system that we currently have, with no restrictions in place, youth are already freely accessing cannabis.

Now, that doesn't mean, Madam Chair, that I think that youth at the age of 14 or 15 or 16 or those that are currently accessing it at these younger ages should be doing so. Absolutely not. But I think setting a higher age limit at 25 or 21 is simply then going to encourage the continuance of that black market that exists. They will continue to look for ways to purchase it from older people, who maybe are going to purchase it and provide it to them, or other ways that might happen. I don't see that setting that higher age would necessarily prevent that from occurring.

Those are just my own thoughts on it. That's why I support the current age limit that we're bringing forward, 18. Certainly, I recognize that youth at that age are still developing and are still learning decision-making skills, but we do trust them to make those decisions around alcohol. We trust them to make those decisions around tobacco. We trust them to make their decisions around driving a vehicle. I think that we can continue to provide education, support, understanding to make sure that at the age of 18 they understand better the implications of some of the decisions they may choose to make. Indeed, we can continue on research and looking into effects, but I do think for the reasons that I stated that we do need to move forward with the age limit of 18.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Rocky Mountain House-Rimbey . . .

Mr. Nixon: And Sundre. Can't forget about Sundre.

The Chair: Don't forget about Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: It's a pretty important place. I do love Sundre, Madam Chair. The Government House Leader likes Sundre as well. I do enjoy that he comes and visits every once in a while. He leaves a note when I'm not around. He's very considerate, as I have always said.

Madam Chair, I actually have a couple questions for the minister – the minister may be able to take a brief moment to answer them – just in regard to this bill. One of them is that some provinces are proposing zero tolerance for commercial drivers, as the minister would know, such as truckers. I guess my question to him: was that a consideration for Alberta? Is that in the works for the future, when roadside screening is available?

I would also point this out or ask it this way. Because there's no approved roadside device for THC yet, which of course the minister would know, it's not very clear how dangerous our roads may become on July 1. I don't think anybody could fully determine that yet. Other jurisdictions, though, have seen an increase in impaired driving incidents after legalization, which the minister also knows. I guess maybe if he could comment a little bit on what he foresees as the ability to be able to test for THC as this legislation goes forward.

Then my last question is that there are many myths that are associated with cannabis not being as impairing as alcohol when people are driving. Maybe the minister could comment on some of the plans for public education around that issue. I think all members of this House agree on the importance of not having people driving impaired or operating equipment in an impaired way. I think we all agree on that, but the fact that that myth does exist: it would be interesting to hear what the minister's thoughts are on how public consultation, public education would go forward on that important issue, I think, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much for those questions, hon. member. Yes, we have been in discussions with the Alberta Motor Transport Association. They are supportive in general of zero tolerance for people operating large trucks, but they've indicated that they want to await a reliable and approved roadside testing, just as the hon. member has said. We'll certainly be considering that when that comes forward. It is not something we've ruled out at all, but we'll continue to have discussions with them on that matter.

With respect to advertising going forward and the communications side of this in general, I also agree that it is a very important thing. I think there are misconceptions with respect to cannabis, and I think we've got a bit of work to do in terms of public awareness and perception of that question. So we will be initiating a public education campaign supporting the implementation early in the new year, and the message is that cannabis is an impairing substance and is going to be treated by the federal government under the Criminal Code and by us through our administrative initiatives in the transportation safety act as seriously as alcohol is.

There are going to be a number of approaches, hon. member, including bought advertising. I'm currently in the process of being briefed by the department with respect to specific messaging, specific media buys, that sort of thing. But we are going to be working on that and taking that as an important priority in the new year. There will be sort of a very vigorous, I think, public information campaign around this legislation and around the dangers of impaired driving involving drugs.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. As I spoke in second reading, I support the bill, and I realize, you know, the provincial government is forced to rush this through because of the federal Bill C-45. You know, that still leaves some questions, and I'm sure the minister has questions as well. He has talked about them and, hopefully, having a roadside test available by July 1. I always hate to count on hopes, but hopefully he does.

Even if we do have a reliable roadside test, then you have to take them back to the police station for blood tests. That's a little bit unclear to me, but it sounds like it's the police station. So you have to train people to take the blood, and I know from what I've been told that the training is only in Arizona, in the States. I could be wrong, but that's what I've been told. In order to get enough people

trained in order to take that blood, even once you get the roadside test approved, you know, who's going to be taking the blood, and what's the cost of this? There's going to be quite a bit of cost if you've got to send people to Arizona to take the course. Are you going to have access to that expertise in rural Alberta and all over? Like, that's a lot of work to get done in a hurry.

4:00

Quite frankly, with no disrespect to the police, obviously, I don't think I'd ever have to. I'm quite confident in myself not having to do it, but I don't think I'd ever want a police officer jabbing me with a needle to take blood out. Even some of the professional nurses have trouble doing that once in a while, so I don't want him doing it either. You know, then you run the risk of infection. Like, there are a lot of questions. I'd sooner have Starke doing it than Ellis. Well, we're not supposed to talk like that.

You know, it just leaves a lot of questions. In a hurry, usually when you're rushed through something like this, it's when mistakes happen. But I know it's not your fault. You're forced to do that. I don't know if you can answer any of those questions.

Also, there's the question about that even if a blood test shows THC in the blood, there's a challenge. Does that mean you're impaired? It can stay in the blood for a long time, the levels, so then it's going to be challenged in courts, I'm sure, and this could drag out for quite a while.

You know, I think the whole thing here in this bill is to take impaired drivers off the road and to keep our roads safe. I know that's what the minister is trying to do, and I think that's what we all want. It's just how we do that. It has been mentioned, the combination of drugs and alcohol. There are a lot of questions. I know our friends from MADD want it to be 22 years of age with zero tolerance.

You know, I just can't see having enough people trained quickly enough by July 1 to be taking the blood tests even if we do have a roadside screening test that sends them there. I know that's putting the minister on the spot, and I know he's forced there by the federal government.

In the end, we'll support this bill because we need legislation to keep our roads safe. There are still a lot of questions around it. That's all.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much. Madam Chair, I'm very sorry. I need to attend at the Premier's office right away, but I'm going to answer these questions. I have my cosponsors here to answer other questions.

First, to deal with the question of impairment, you know, the federal amendments to the Criminal Code are quite clear. They are using a per se limit, as we have done in this country with the .08. So if you are at .08 blood alcohol content or higher, you are deemed to be impaired without any further proof required. The federal government is adopting the same approach with the two- and five-nanogram limits. A more serious penalty is applied if it's five or higher, but it is also a criminal offence at two and higher. In the act there's not a requirement to prove actual impairment. It's a simple per se test, and that's how they're going to proceed.

With respect to costs, there are costs associated with this. As you know, we are not in agreement with the federal government's position on the splitting of the revenues because all the costs come to the province and to municipalities and very few of the costs accrue to the federal government, yet they're going to take 50 per

cent of the revenue from the sale of cannabis. We don't agree with that position.

Costs to us have been estimated at about \$10.1 million over five years. We expect \$6.6 million for one-time costs and \$3.42 million in ongoing costs, and the cost recovery is estimated at \$190,375 annually. Those are preliminary numbers. We are certainly going to have to train additional people. One of the things you didn't mention, hon. member, is that in addition to technicians that will be required to administer the blood tests, we are also employing drug recognition experts and training them to recognize the symptoms, and that will be considered sufficient in order to lay a charge under the transportation safety act that we're proposing, perhaps not a criminal charge.

As the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has indicated, the range of drugs available that aren't captured by this legislation or by the federal Criminal Code that cause impairment require the kinds of tests that aren't necessarily a chemical blood test or, you know, a saliva test or a breathalyzer or something. It requires the ability to recognize impairment. Yes, it is somewhat subjective, but actually the evidence shows that people properly trained have a very high success rate in identifying not just impairment but the drug causing the impairment. It's not perfect, but that is something we're going – so those will be costs as well. My experience is that when they bring you the first set of numbers, they may not be the last set of numbers. Just an observation, watching government for a long time. But those are the numbers we have now.

The Chair: Any other comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to move an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A3.
Go ahead.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment is an important addition to Bill 29, An Act to Reduce Cannabis and Alcohol Impaired Driving. This amendment will save lives, I believe, as our province deals with a newly legalized recreational drug which our police services are not necessarily ready for at this time. I recognize that "saving lives" is a strong statement, but this amendment will do just that by implementing zero tolerance for any driver found with marijuana in their system.

I would seek guidance from the chair. I can read the amendment in its entirety into the record, or I can essentially highlight the part of the amendment for members to take notice of.

The Chair: Hon. member, it's not necessary to read the whole amendment. If everybody has got a copy, they can follow along as you highlight for them.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Essentially, what we're dealing with here in amendment A3 is on page 3 of the amendment under item D, where

Section 15 is amended as follows:

You'll see a line there entitled

(a) the heading preceding section 90(1) is amended by striking out "re novice driver";

and in

(b) in clause (b) by striking out the proposed section 90(2.1) and substituting the following:

(2.1) If a peace officer reasonably suspects that the driver of a motor vehicle, having consumed a drug, drove the motor vehicle, the peace officer may require that the driver

forthwith provide a bodily substance sample for analysis by approved drug screening equipment.

When we look at the current bill, we see that novice drivers would have zero tolerance. But our UCP caucus has many concerns with the way our federal government has forced legalization and legalized marijuana on us, and we recognize that our provincial government has to be prepared for it. My concern with Bill 29 is that our government should be taking maximum measures to ensure safety on our roads once this drug is legalized.

4:10

Madam Chair, there is no approved roadside device at this time to measure cannabis impairment, and even if the Trudeau government manages to sanction one in time for July 1, 2018, many court challenges are expected to follow. Despite this, our Liberal government in Ottawa is forging ahead, but my question is: are we ready? That is why our UCP caucus is asking our provincial government to join Quebec in setting zero tolerance for all drivers on our province's roads.

Currently Bill 29 proposes only to extend zero tolerance for drugs to novice drivers, but establishing zero tolerance for every driver sends Albertans the strongest message possible about the dangers of using marijuana and then getting behind the wheel. I believe it also sends a firm message to Ottawa that fast-tracking legislation is not acceptable, especially when the objective is solely to cross a campaign promise off a list.

We must be ready before we move forward, and I believe that we need to ensure that we are proceeding in the safest possible manner and sending the signal to Albertans that the provincial government is ready to take a firm stand on the use of cannabis and the operation of motor vehicles. We need to ensure that our roads are safe. We might not be able to slow down legalization, but our UCP caucus believes that zero tolerance is vital for the safety of Albertans, particularly when legalization is, I believe, occurring prematurely.

I do want to point out that zero tolerance is an administrative sanction for low levels of THC or, for that matter, any legal drug that's in a driver's system. If police deem a driver is impaired by drugs and they lay criminal charges, the driver would face another layer of administrative sanctions. Of course, they would have to deal with the criminal charges in court, but zero tolerance is the same kind of system that is in place now for novice or inexperienced drivers, and I hope that all members of this House view this amendment as taking a strong stance that is needed as we deal with a newly legalized recreational drug in Canada.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm actually pleased to rise again to discuss this important bill. I rise basically for many reasons, some of which I outlined in my comments on second reading. We do need to keep our roads safe in this province, and we do need to be able to respond to what is coming down the road – sorry for the pun – in terms of federal legislation. We can't put our heads in the sand and not react to what the federal government is proposing. Basically this province is showing a great deal of anticipation and innovativeness in dealing with this and giving our police services as well as the public clear messages about how we are not going to tolerate impaired driving on the streets and roads of Alberta.

I'm speaking, actually, in opposition to this amendment. I think it is well intentioned, and I appreciate the words of the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, but I don't think it deals really with the reality of 2017. The reality is that cannabis is an important part

of the medical armamentarium for many people, and as of July of 2018 it is actually going to be a legal substance. To say that all drivers, adults as well as persons with graduated licences, cannot have any cannabis in their saliva or in their blood if they're operating a vehicle really is not realistic. I'm particularly concerned about my patients that I prescribe medical marijuana for. If we would follow the reasoning of the UCP opposition, those people would actually be denied the opportunity to operate a motor vehicle because, as has been said several times by several speakers here, cannabis actually persists in the body.

You know, I go back, actually, to the Winter Olympics – I think it was 20 or 25 years ago – and I know that some of my colleagues remember this. Ross Rebagliati was initially denied a gold medal that, in my opinion, he richly deserved for his efforts, and it was subsequently replaced because it may be the situation – I don't think we know all of the details of this – that he was at a party in which he absorbed some second-hand cannabis smoke and that this material actually persisted in his urine for a long time.

Dr. Starke: It's okay. Ross isn't sure either.

Dr. Turner: He's forgotten about the episode.

But that's an example of this sort of thing. Certainly, my patients who I prescribe medical marijuana for would be subject to the same sort of limitations.

I think that to burden this act with this sort of legislation would be very short-sighted. For sure, the defence lawyers are going to be taking this to the courts, and it will go all the way up to the Supreme Court, and it will take years to do this. In the meantime our ability to enforce a reasonable legislation in this province will be hampered, in my opinion.

You know, the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock talks about forced legalization by the feds. Well, I really disagree with that sort of verbiage. It is and was in the power of the federal government to do this. This sort of so-called forced legalization has occurred in many jurisdictions in the United States and elsewhere, particularly in Europe, and there doesn't seem to be the crisis that is being implied by that verbiage.

There's also concern that there isn't an approved roadside device. Well, apparently, those roadside devices are being developed, and I think we have to take the assurances of Health Canada and the federal government that those devices will be available by July 2018.

The fact that Quebec has decided on zero tolerance I have some problems with, too. I mean, I don't understand why they didn't support the Energy East pipeline. I don't understand their approach to human rights with persons wearing the niqab, et cetera. I'm not sure that I want to join with Quebec in this kind of legislation, which I think is also very short-sighted.

You know, the point of this legislation – I'm going to come back to the main point of this legislation – is to get Alberta ready for the legalization, and that means that we have to have procedures and practices in place that are going to be able to withstand at least most of the court challenges and keep our roads safe.

4:20

In today's *Globe and Mail*, actually, there is an obituary of John Bates. He was actually the founder of MADD Canada, and he was the son of Dr. Bates, who was Canada's original anti drunk driving advocate. It was actually a story that's very similar to the story that was told by my colleague from Edmonton-McClung and my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster that led Dr. Bates, the father of John Bates, to develop this. This was the death of a friend, a 17-year-old son of June Callwood, who's a famous Canadian

author and publisher. This led to the development of an organization, primarily in Ontario and Quebec, that agitated for improvements in the prevention of impaired driving through legislation as well as public education things. Basically, John Bates continued throughout his life. He was 90 years old when he died, so much of the work that he did was 20, 30, 40 years ago.

What MADD Canada would tell us to do is to get ready for the inevitable, which is that there is going to be cannabis being utilized in a recreational manner as of July 2018. The other thing that's important that MADD would want me to be reminding folks of is that this particular bill that we're discussing, Bill 29, is also going to be correcting a hole in the Alberta legislation in regard to mandatory suspension of driving privileges. I think that to try to tinker with what we're doing at this date rather than waiting for next year, when we know that the devices are going to be available and what the various impairment things are, is very short-sighted.

For all of those reasons, I'm going to basically urge my colleagues not to support this legislation – to not support the amendment. I'm opposed to amendment A3.

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification, hon. member.

Any other speakers to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I had said earlier, before A3, I believe that we need to do a better job of making sure that we can take impaired drivers off the road. I can tell you that my colleague has brought forward a very important piece of legislation, an amendment that will actually take into account that right now we just don't have the ability to protect our roads from drivers that are under the influence of drugs. Now, what I will say is that this is something that we can change once the tests are in place. Once we have the ability to be able to test for this drug, then we'll be able to move forward and say that we've got a good, strict set of guidelines to be able to do that.

Now, obviously, Quebec is not one of my favourite provinces right now as they have had some trouble with our pipelines, but I will say that they did bring forward a clear direction for their roads. They saw the problem. They saw that this is a result that could cost the province millions if not billions of dollars in liability, which is something I just brought up in the speech before, saying: because we have no way of testing and getting impaired people off the roads, will our province become liable, when it comes time, from the fact that these people could be caught and that we let them go and that then they create a heinous crime? Quebec has seen this as a problem. I don't know why we would not see this and give this the same gravity that they are giving this same issue.

Now, I hear the concern from the government member saying that he feels that we're in the right spot and that we should just trust the federal government because they're going to do the right thing. I would say that Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberals made a campaign promise, realized that they had to fulfill the campaign promise, and now we're stuck with a rushed-through piece of legislation with no ability to be able to deal with the fact that we have unsafe job sites, that we're going to have unsafe roads, and that we have the potential of this getting into the hands of children.

Now, if this is something that the federal Liberals wanted to move towards, then they needed these solutions ahead of time. That is what a responsible government does. We can either accept that our roads are unsafe, or we can use zero tolerance as a platform to move forward, and this is where our amendment before was so important. We had a request for a sunset clause put into this because we can always go back to correct this. With the first few deaths that come through where it can be shown that they may have been preventable,

this is on us as legislators for not saying right off the bat that driving under the influence of marijuana is not okay under any circumstance until we have the ability to test for impairment.

Now, I understand the Transportation minister – and I thank him for his answers and the clarity brought forward after my last speech – saying that we do have the ability to do a potential roadside screening eventually, but I'll tell you that it doesn't fill me with a warm, fuzzy feeling that we don't have that technology here now. We also don't have the ability to be able to say: "Hey, you know what? This is where an impaired person's place is once we've caught them." Now, I understand that there are some certain milligrams of THCs in the blood and that kind of stuff, and again I do share some sympathy for the current government from the fact that this is being rammed down our throats even though the member from across feels that this is something that has been long in coming, probably.

I will tell you that, in the end, we are looking at unsafe roads. This is something that is incredibly unbelievable and irresponsible for us as a government to move forward with. That's why A3 is so important. It is so important. How many tragedies are we going to see, moving forward, until we realize as a government that we need to prevent them? Are we going to be going back in a year from now? The government has done this several times. If you look at the debt cap that was put on there, three months later we got rid of it. It's because what happens is that if you don't fully think out how this is going to impact Albertans and the safety of Albertans, the risk outweighs what the benefits are here, and I don't see any benefits. I just see a whole lot of risk. Zero tolerance is the clear way to go. It is the clear way for us to be responsible parliamentarians, to be ensuring that our citizens are safe.

Now, I see that we do have other provinces that are moving along in the same direction, but in the end are they going to run into the same problems that we are running into when we are having people, potentially, on our roads that are very, very unsafe?

4:30

Now, the one thing that is brought up by the Minister of Transportation is that we don't have the swab ready to be able to test for it quite yet – that's at the roadside – so then we are going to the next part, which is a blood test. I am always concerned when you start jabbing people with needles, and we heard that from one of the other members, saying that we need to be careful when we start putting needles into people.

Dr. Swann: I don't like it either.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you to my colleague, who agrees that being stuck with needles is not a favourite thing of his.

But you know what? I have to say that we are seeing a movement these days that shows that we constitutionally have the right to have our own bodies. Is it something that we're going to see someday, where you're going to need a warrant in order to get blood out of a person? If we need a warrant, how do we get to that blood? Even if for some reason, let's say, this test comes through, the swab test on the road, this test to be able to decide whether or not this person has some impairment – let's say that the government of Canada, the federal government, is able to bring that forward before July 1, fully train all of our police forces on how to do it responsibly even though I hear it's something like \$18,000 per officer to do that training, and somebody can correct me if I'm wrong – what we're looking at here is an incredible cost, but we're also looking at a person's rights. When we start to say that if a warrant is needed, then we will know for a fact that that person is impaired, but we are not able to test to

be able to get to that impairment, this is a problem. We really need to ensure that we have people that are impaired off the roads.

Now, I don't know if the solution is ever going to be a breathalyzer like alcohol. That is something that I would say that someday we might get to. I do believe that we're probably in the long term going to be looking at blood tests when we look at impairment when it comes to our marijuana use. So until we have the science in place, zero tolerance just makes sense. It makes sense. It is something that we need to start investigating right now. We need to start saying that at this moment we agree that the federal government is moving towards legalizing marijuana, cannabis. It is looking at moving in this direction, fine, but let's keep our roads safe, let's keep our jobs safe, and let's make sure that this stuff is out of the hands of our children. As we have seen repeatedly, this is something that is completely destructive for youth.

When we start looking at what's happening these days, we're actually having people on the roadside refusing to provide breathalyzers. I can only assume that same response is going to happen with marijuana. If we're looking at the fact that denying or refusing breathalyzers is something that is out there at present and that they know that at the end of this a blood test is going to be there for marijuana, will we see a ton of people refusing these tests right on the roadside?

Now, I fully have confidence in our RCMP, I have full confidence in our sheriffs, I have full confidence in our peace officers that they will use every tool they have to keep our roads safe. All confidence. But if we don't give them the tools, they can't do the job, so it's not their fault when this stuff happens, when terrible things happen. It comes down to us as legislators making the right decisions, making sure the roads are safe.

My colleague has brought forward a reasonable amendment that this House needs to see, needs to move forward, and actually needs to put into this legislation. Let's not think about this right now. Let's think about this a year from now, when this government realizes that it made a mistake and will be looking through *Hansard* and seeing my comments saying: why do we not do this now, before it becomes a real problem to correct later on down the road? For some reason the federal government rushed through the process – that's what it looks like they're doing – for roadside screening, and you know what ends up happening? We throw out all of the cases for six or eight months because it's not a responsible way to roadside screen.

That is awful that we have people that have victimized Albertans and that have put Albertans at risk that have no chance of seeing justice. This is exactly what's happening with the Jordan case that moved forward, that our courts are holding criminals in them for too long without actually following through with the case. This is the same kind of thing that lets criminals onto the streets that should be in our prisons or our correctional facilities, our remand centres. These people who drive under the influence need to be held responsible for the crime of driving under the influence. That is just a fact. Until we can do roadside screening, until that happens, until we see the federal government has had proven cases through the courts, until we see that the blood tests will always be available to us, we need to step back, we need to re-evaluate, and we need to go zero tolerance for marijuana when it comes to driving.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other speakers on amendment A3? I'll recognize Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm standing to speak against the amendment. I'm sure everyone in here has a friend, a loved one who has been affected by an impaired driver. It doesn't

matter if it's cannabis or if it's alcohol or any other kind of drug: zero tolerance for cannabis isn't going to stop people who don't believe they are impaired.

I'm a total nondrinker, so I don't personally understand how someone would choose to get behind the wheel when they've been drinking. It's just something that's foreign to me. But you've got people like Brad Arseneault, who was 18, Kole Novak, who was 18, Thaddeus Lake, who was 22, who were killed by an impaired driver going 243 kilometres in a 70 zone, and he plead not guilty because he didn't think he was impaired.

It doesn't matter what substance you're impaired on; it's your choice whether or not you're going to drink and drive, drug and drive, or drink and drug and drive. In the end it is the person who is imbibing the substances that is putting the people at risk. It's not saying that it's zero tolerance, which it is for GDL licences. Saying that we're going to put people at risk because everybody isn't at zero tolerance, that's just wrong. It's the person who is drinking or drugging and driving that is putting the people at risk. That's not right to blame it on all of society. It's the perpetrators who are the guilty ones.

Thank you.

The Chair: Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It is a pleasure to stand and speak to this amendment in regard to zero tolerance. I think it's widely known, of course, that I do have a background in law enforcement. You know, I've been listening both in my office, of course, and here now, and I would really at this point like to take my partisan hat off and speak to you as a former sergeant with the Calgary Police Service. This is not an amendment that is taken lightly. I agree with my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I mean, what we're talking about here is saving people's lives.

4:40

I heard a comment earlier, and I agree that there's a cultural shift, and I agree that it is going to be legalized. But there are many prescriptions, there are many opioids that people are prescribed where it specifically says: do not operate heavy machinery; don't drive. I mean, we have to understand the impairment of tracking, reaction time, visual function, concentration, short-term memory, the ability to respond to multiple sources of information, and reaction to unexpected events. I mean, these are all parts of a human being that are impacted by marijuana.

I've certainly had an opportunity to do my homework on this subject as well and talk to law enforcement from around the province, not just the Calgary Police Service but around the province. I've talked to high-ranking officials. So let's take a step back here and talk about how this would play out. Right now there is nothing to test whether somebody is impaired. I know that there is a swab test that is potentially in the process that is hopefully going to be done by the federal government by July of next year. Let's just make the assumption that that swab test is going to be approved.

Okay. Great. Now we're assuming that we're dealing with co-operative individuals. I can tell you as a former certified breath technician with the province of Alberta that when we're dealing with people that are impaired, they're not always co-operative. When I read somebody a breath demand, I cannot tell you the number of times that I've been informed that – of course, they say it with a slurred tone when they're talking to me – the instrument is broken or defective in some way.

But let's just assume – let's assume – that this swab test is going to work and it is going to say that the person has THC content in them, which, of course, will give that officer reasonable grounds

now to lay the arrest when it comes to impaired driving by drugs. Okay. Now what do we do? Well, I've heard numerous people, even in my investigation here, say: well, we'll just go and get a blood test. Who's going to conduct this blood test? What resources do we have to take blood? Let me tell you – I'm going to correct, with all due respect, my friend from Bonnyville-Cold Lake – that taking somebody's blood is the most invasive thing that law enforcement or any government can do.

Yes, you need a judicial warrant in order to take anybody's blood. So, okay, let's assume now that I go and I get that judicial warrant. God knows how many hours it's going to take to get that warrant. Are we going to take these people to the emergency room? Are we going to have all of our hospitals now filled with impaired drivers by drug? Are the doctors going to need that warrant in order to extract that blood?

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Then I heard a possible theory, and the theory goes: well, we'll just have law enforcement do it. Well, let me tell you that all the high-ranking members of the law enforcement community that I spoke to, when I told them this, met me with complete and utter laughter: "You're kidding me. There is no policeman that's going to extract anybody's blood." There is no law enforcement community in this province that, even if you say that this is something they can do, will do it. I'm telling you that right now.

Okay. So let's assume that you've now decided that we are going to take these people to the police station. Okay. Now we're going to have to set up some sort of infrastructure with somebody that we're going to have to pay or on a call-out basis to extract blood, which is obviously going to be some technician, some nurse. I don't know, right? These are things that we have to consider, but I can tell you that it is not going to happen that the law enforcement community is going to extract people's blood.

We do that right now for impaired driving by alcohol, and we do it when somebody has been involved in a very dangerous accident, like was previously mentioned by my colleague on the other side, where the person has been unconscious or unable to give a breath demand. Yes, when the person is taken to the hospital, we do get a blood sample from them. However, that is done through a judicial warrant. There is, again, nothing that this Assembly can do that will likely not require a judicial warrant to extract somebody's blood, not to mention – and I think it was previously mentioned. Let's figure out how this is going to play in court, shall we? I can tell you right now that numerous defence attorneys that I have spoken to are salivating right now at the challenges that are going to occur with this.

So when we talk about lives, when we talk about saving people, really, from a nonpartisan perspective, honestly, zero tolerance is really the way to go on this. You know, when we now put the partisan hat on, I can't believe that we're the ones arguing for zero tolerance and that the other side is not.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

I'm sorry, but I have attended so many traffic accidents. I'll give you one. When I first attended district 2, which is the community in which I live, the first call I went to as a sergeant in that specific district was a 3 o'clock in the morning incident whereby these two lovely people were driving people home who were too impaired to drive a vehicle. They were minding their own business. They had finished dropping off the people that were impaired, and they were driving. I don't want to give too many details because I don't want to. They were driving people home. Along comes Mr. Offender in

his brand new \$100,000-plus Mercedes-Benz doing 200-plus kilometres on the road and, bam, nails them, T-bones them. Both people died. The poor lady that was in the vehicle was flung from the vehicle. The top of her head was decapitated. That's not just alcohol, you guys. That's impaired. That's marijuana as well. That's opioids. It's anything that can affect one's ability to operate a motor vehicle.

You are putting lives at risk – I swear to you – by not accepting this amendment. This isn't just me talking. This isn't a partisan person talking as part of the Conservative Party. Now I'm going to speak on behalf of my friends in the law enforcement community, who I am proud to unofficially represent, and say that you're affecting them. You are affecting their ability right now, and you are putting lives at risk.

I have been to the impaired accidents. I do not want to see – and let me tell you something. I have charged people with impaired driving by marijuana because you can obviously smell the burned marijuana, right? The signs, the indicia: the bloodshot eyes, the slow and deliberate movements.

Yes, it is a choice. I agree. It is a choice that they make, and people make poor decisions while under the influence of alcohol and while under the influence of drugs. Sadly, in the world in which we live, we need to help them not make those poor choices. That is through education, that is through prevention, and that is through intervention. That's why it is actually very important to support this amendment, not because, you know, you think you're going to give the UCP a win here and that somehow it's going to advantage them in some way. No, no.

4:50

This was thrust upon you guys. It was thrust upon us by the federal government. This was a law that was not thought through. I gave the House leader credit – didn't I? – earlier today because I know that they care. I know that you guys are doing the best that you can do. Nobody in this world is perfect, but we can do it better together. We did it in Bill 205. I give you guys as much credit as I get for Bill 205, and I'm happy to give you guys credit for this. You guys were given this. I don't want to swear here and use my police language, but you guys were given a sandwich that doesn't look very good, and you guys are trying to make something out of it. I get that.

An Hon. Member: It doesn't taste very good either.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. I get that – right? – and I give you guys credit.

But this is something that, quite frankly, we can do to make this better. Yeah, we have GDL drivers, and, yeah, we have, again, you know, all different types of commercial drivers, but I can tell you right now that, from marijuana to opioids to alcohol, specifically here in regard to marijuana, there has to be a zero tolerance because, as to my previous amendment here, this is just an evolving sphere, an evolving process that none of us – I don't expect you guys to get a grasp on this.

This is a cultural shift in our society. This is an industry that is currently owned and operated by organized crime. Organized crime is who deals with this industry. So we need to work together on this for the people of this province, for the constituents whom we represent, for the people who could potentially become victims of impaired drivers through marijuana no differently than impaired drivers through alcohol.

I was proud to hear earlier today – it was before my time – that the previous NDP caucus under the House leader did support that .05. I had some influence on that, and I'm proud to say that I did – right? – because I understood what was happening in our court

systems in regard to impaired drivers. I saw the lives of the people who were victims of impaired drivers. That couple that I told you about: I haven't even touched on their families, that were impacted.

Yeah, that guy: he pled not guilty. He pled not guilty not because he thought he wasn't impaired; he pled not guilty because, quite frankly, that's the system which we're in right now. Sadly – sadly – quite frankly, it's become a running joke amongst our law enforcement community that for \$10,000 or \$15,000 you can get off an impaired driving charge. Sure. Does that make it right? No, right? Sometimes it's over technicalities. I've heard of technicalities where somebody alleged that their shoes were the wrong size, which is why they were walking a little awkwardly. Come on. You guys know as well as I know that that was probably not accurate, again trying to be really nice here. However, these are likely people that got off impaired driving charges.

So what can we do to help protect this community, to help protect the people we represent? I think that we work co-operatively on this bill, which I think we are doing, from what I've seen, and we actually support this zero tolerance. We support it. I don't think there's a person over there that doesn't want to save a life. Otherwise, you wouldn't have supported Bill 205. I think that by supporting this bill, you can have another chance to say again that you did something and that you've done it before and you'll do it again. But this is another opportunity to say: hey, we did something good today, and we can save some lives.

I want to thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak here. I don't think I even touched any of my notes. I spoke with passion because I care, and I believe – I believe – that you guys will do the right thing here. I really do, and I say that with the sincerest, sincerest part of me. You will do the right thing. I believe that zero tolerance is the right thing here in this particular case.

Madam Chair, thank you very much for your time.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Yes. I'd just like to take a few minutes to speak to this amendment, too. Obviously, this situation that we're in here now was brought on, of course, by the federal government. This government and we in this Legislature are forced to come up with something to deal with this issue that's been brought forward. I think it's very unfortunate that the federal government put the cart before the horse. They didn't come up with the proper way to do this. I mean, here we are, where there's something that's going to become legalized that creates impairment, that could create many safety issues on our streets, and this government hasn't fully thought this out and doesn't have a plan in place. There's no strategy here to deal with the situation of safety on the highways and on the streets in our cities and towns and across Canada.

I wanted to read here just a little bit from a CBC article. It's from a July 2017 report by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Now, the spokesman for this organization, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, says:

Tests alone are not good indicators of cannabis impairment.

"The thing about cannabis is the effects are quite variable . . . You can find impairment at very, very low levels, as well as higher levels."

According to this report

THC levels in blood drop dramatically – as much as 80 to 90 per cent – within 30 minutes after ingesting.

But, the report said "peak impairment occurs at 90 minutes after smoking while the THC level has declined over 80 per cent from the peak level."

What this report concludes is:

THC level in blood (or oral fluid) does not appear to be an accurate and reliable predictor of impairment from THC.

Here we have a situation where this person who would be considered an expert, far more expert than myself or anybody in this room because this is what they do, has concluded that "THC level in blood (or oral fluid) does not appear to be an accurate and reliable predictor of impairment from THC." We're sitting here in a situation where this will become legal on July 1 according to the federal government. We talk about: "Okay. There are blood tests. There are saliva tests. There are all these different things that are coming about that supposedly work." But we have experts saying that they don't work, so we don't have anything that's reliable. We don't have anything that's for sure, but of course the federal government is going to push this through anyway.

We have an opportunity with this amendment to have a safety net, basically, for the people of Alberta until something comes up that is reliable, that is proven, that they can rely on. We can have that safety net in place by passing this amendment until such a time as there is something to accurately gauge these substances and their effects on people and their driving. I think we need to support this amendment. We need to carry on with the business of protecting Albertans. This is all about impairment. This has nothing to do with the legalization of marijuana, because that's a federal issue, and that's what they're bound and determined to do. This has to do with protecting the public of Alberta on the streets and highways, and this amendment allows us that opportunity to have a greater influence on the safety of Albertans.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

5:00

Mr. McIver: Yeah. And I will be brief. I promise you, Madam Chair. The other reason that hasn't been, in my view, talked about today is the uncertainty. There have been different comments about how good the tests are for marijuana, knowing whether you're impaired. I think it's fairly documented that there are strong legislation and well-accepted tests for alcohol. What we haven't really talked about, which is another reason to pass this amendment, is the uncertainty about the combination of alcohol and marijuana. If you're under the legal limit for alcohol and you're under the legal limit for marijuana, combined are you impaired? I don't know. If somebody in this room thinks they've got the answer to that, I wish they'd pop up when I'm finished and tell me. But if nobody in the room does have the answer, then perhaps you should pass this amendment in order to keep the roads safe and to not, by virtue of not asking the right questions, put the roads at risk of being unsafe.

So I'll ask the members of the House to think about that. I haven't heard anybody suggest that they had the answer to that question along the way here, and without that answer I'm not sure what choice we have but to vote for this particular amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the combination – and I'm not sure that this is the answer he's looking for because it's right in the materials – in case there's some confusion about it, the federal Criminal Code amendments include limits for combined alcohol and marijuana use, and they are 2.5 nanograms per millilitre or more of THC combined with 50 milligrams per 100 millilitres or more of alcohol. The first offence

is proposed at a minimum \$1,000 fine and a criminal record, a second offence is a mandatory 30 days' imprisonment, and a third or subsequent offence is a mandatory 120 days' imprisonment.

With respect to some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Calgary-West with respect to difficulties involved with collecting blood, blood samples have always been available without a warrant at the hospital pursuant to the Criminal Code blood demand. Bill C-46 greatly expands police power to obtain a blood sample by creating qualified blood technicians – and we have money budgeted for this expense, which I answered in response to the hon. member earlier today – who can take samples which would not be taken at the hospital. Bill C-46 will allow these samples to be made without a warrant whenever an officer has reasonable grounds to believe the person is impaired, over .08 or over the blood drug concentration. And an accused can request a sample for independent testing if it is taken pursuant to the code.

I just want to indicate that while I recognize the experience of the hon. Member for Calgary-West, under the current regime the rules are being modified in the new legislation, which will make it considerably easier to utilize blood samples.

I just wanted to provide that, Madam Chair and, with that, hope that we can proceed, then, to a vote on this amendment.

The Chair: Any other speakers on amendment A3?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 29?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 29 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 27

Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 2017

The Chair: Hon. members, are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to continue debate on Bill 27, the Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 2017. Alberta's public agencies play a pivotal role in regulating, managing, and delivering important programs and services to Albertans on behalf of government as well as providing oversight and advice on provincial issues. The amendment to the current Conflicts of Interest Act will strengthen the legislation, expanding it to apply to the senior staff of our province's agencies, boards, and commissions.

At this time I would like to propose a House amendment to Bill 27. I would like to explain the purpose of this amendment.

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. This contracted service provider, Covenant Health, has been included with three subsidiaries of Alberta Health Services as four health entities under the Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 2017. However, Covenant Health is not defined as a public agency under APAGA, the Alberta Public Agencies

Governance Act. In fact, it is a nonprofit health care provider that provides contracted health care services to Alberta Health Services. Covenant Health should still be covered by the legislation. In fact, as a publicly funded health care provider it has assured the government that it supports being part of the conflict-of-interest framework.

However, we have determined that we can capture this another way and ensure that Covenant Health is still appropriately covered under a conflict-of-interest framework while also providing room to add other similar entities in the future. We propose to remove Covenant Health from being specifically named in the act. Instead, we would develop a description of nonprofit health care service providers that would take effect through an order in council such that Covenant Health would still be subject to the act. This is important as it means that Covenant Health would still be subject to the same requirements as APAGA agencies. It would still have to develop codes of conduct as well as core and additional requirements and be subject to review by the Ethics Commissioner. The Ethics Commissioner would still have the same oversight. This oversight would include the statutory authority to investigate breaches or report on the sufficiency of the organization's code of conduct requirements.

We also recognize that in the future there may be similar organizations to Covenant Health that could be captured in a broader description, depending upon the financial threshold that is established. Government will develop a definition that includes nonprofit health care service providers that receive a substantial amount of public funding for their operating budgets. This amendment will provide greater flexibility should we determine there are other similar organizations.

I'd also like to point out that this amendment does not impact the broader policy intent or effect of the bill.

With that, I would like to address the proposed House amendment that is before the committee today, the proposed amendment amending section 1(4) in proposed section 23.921(1) by striking out clause (b) and then in clause (d) by adding "or described" after "identified."

I look forward to your questions and ask for your support on this amendment to the bill itself so it would say:

- (d) any other body, whether incorporated or not, that is identified or described by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, by order, as a public agency for the purposes of this Part.

And above on page 5, (b) would be struck out.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

5:10

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to amendment A2? I'll recognize Calgary-Mountain View first.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just a little bit confused at why we would single out one of many, I assume, organizations that are under the rubric of nonprofit or charitable services contracted or supervised by, in this case, Alberta Health but the government of Alberta. Does this not unnecessarily complicate the whole range of organizations that would now be under question if they're not included in this bill?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. Actually, what we're doing is not singling out Covenant Health. We're putting a more general description in clause (d), and we will take time to appropriately define what those services should be that are covered under clause (d). In future there may be additional entities that need to be included, and clause (d)

as it's amended, I'm suggesting, would allow us to bring those entities in. In fact, we met with Covenant Health, and they requested this change. We were agreeable to undertake it because, really, Covenant Health and other entities might be the ones we want to include in this public agency for coverage under the conflicts of interest.

I think this is more comprehensive than what we had identified here. We'll follow through with that to define appropriately those entities that need to be covered under conflict of interest and to give us some time to do that.

Dr. Swann: Can I just follow up? It's not clear at all to me why we are singling them out for exclusion, and who else – I mean, are you asking us to trust you that you're going to go forward and include this and other such agencies? I thought we were talking about all agencies, boards, and commissions that are currently under the auspices of the government of Alberta. Why would we even single out Covenant Health when we've been talking about all agencies, boards, and commissions in addition to the government? It's not clear to me why this is needed.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. If you have the bill in front of you, they were singled out under this clause (b). What we are endeavouring to do is to say that agencies like Covenant Health will be included under the Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act.

Mr. Mason: This is not just Covenant Health.

Mr. Ceci: Yeah. This is not just Covenant Health. This is all entities that receive public dollars that are APAGA and non-APAGA, but we will have the ability to describe them now in (d). Going forward, there may be additional agencies we want to put in there, so the description will be broad enough that it can include those agencies that receive public dollars. Covenant is one of those.

The Chair: Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to my colleagues for presenting this amendment and the colleague from Calgary for helping with a clarification. I guess one of my concerns, though: when we go to (d) and we're talking order in council, "is identified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council," we're talking cabinet. We're not talking the 87 representatives of Alberta's people. Obviously, your government has had a long time since our last break to get this organized – okay; an important oversight – but it's going to be viewed by fewer Albertans, by fewer elected representatives.

You also said, hon. minister, in your comments that you would be looking or cabinet would be looking to include more, hopefully, than Covenant Health. Now, I think back to some of the earlier concerns that I and my colleagues had with this bill, and it was a fact that agricultural practices was the big one. We heard the answer that maybe it was working because no committees had been struck to ensure that agriculture had its given right to do what it needed to do to put food on the table for Albertans and for the world. We had an opportunity to understand each other better and to understand where that could go, but that doesn't happen in cabinet meetings. That happens here in the Legislature.

I guess I'd like to hear from you, sir, your thoughts on how big clause (d) may get and why we couldn't have done this with an amendment here today. Or let's hoist the whole law, and let's take

some time to do it properly. I mean, there are other things, there are other ways to do this other than behind the closed doors of cabinet.

I'd appreciate an answer.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance we are on the amendment specifically, so if the hon. member has some other sections that he wishes to address relative to the authority of Executive Council versus the Legislative Assembly, you know, I'm happy to address that.

This is in the act. It's called Application, 23.921(1). It basically says that

this Part applies in respect of the following public agencies:

- (a) a public agency to which the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act applies and the subsidiaries of the public agency.

So those are the APAGA agencies that the minister is referring to, and that's (a).

(b) Covenant Health and the subsidiaries of Covenant Health, which are named specifically in the act.

Then others are:

- (c) regional health authorities and subsidiary health corporations under the Regional Health Authorities Act;
- (d) any other body, whether incorporated or not, that is identified [or described] by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, by order, as a public agency for the purposes of this Part.

That may be what the hon. member is referring to. It is not being amended by this amendment, which simply strikes out clause (b) and adds "or described" under clause (d). So clause (d) is amended but not in the part that the member is suggesting.

You know, there's always this conflict or tension between what's appropriate for legislation and what's appropriate for regulation. We have in legislation many responsibilities. It's my view that a body that is identified or described, whether incorporated or not, as a public agency is not something that we want to come back to the House for a bill on every time we decide that a particular clinic or some other health organization should come under the Conflicts of Interest Act. I don't think that's practical. These kinds of things are normally left either at the discretion of the minister or of cabinet as a whole, and then it would be subject to an order in council.

If we adopted the principle that all of these things had to be brought before the Legislative Assembly, we would be meeting in continuous session throughout the year and into the evening. I'm not sure that we would actually be able to focus on the important legislation that we're responsible for.

With the greatest of respect, hon. member, I don't think that the suggestion that this should be done by legislation in the Assembly is a practical suggestion.

The Chair: Cypress-Medicine Hat.

5:20

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleague for that answer. Again, I'm concerned. We're going to have a gap in time until an order in council puts Covenant Health and others there.

Why I mentioned that agriculture incident is because it was originally included in this bill. We heard from several Albertans that it was a problem, that even though a committee hadn't been struck since 2011, maybe a committee hadn't been struck because the law was working, that access to the Farmers' Advocate office, I believe it was, instead of a more expensive court system maybe was a check and balance between urban development and the

opportunity that we need for that and agricultural practices and the ability to do best practices.

I guess I would say again that this, to me, looks like a step to putting more decisions in the hands of cabinet and fewer in the Legislature. You know, my hon. colleague talked about that, well, we shouldn't have to come here if we want to do clinics. Well, maybe you should. I mean, thank goodness that we were able to shed some light on the agricultural practice part.

I guess that at this point in time – I mean, we had a nice long break. You had lots of time to get this organized, and I appreciate that there's maybe a change there. But, again, my preference is to have the 87 of us have the opportunity to debate these, to have the 87 of us have the opportunity to debate it when some media are here rather than in cabinet.

For that reason, at this point in time I think I'll be against the amendment.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments with respect to amendment A2?

Seeing none, are you ready for the vote?

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 27?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 27 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills with some amendments: Bill 29 and Bill 27. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, if I may, I want to thank everyone for their great contributions this afternoon and for the efficiency with which we conducted public business, and I would move that we adjourn the Assembly until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Introduction of Guests	2041, 2051
Members' Statements	
Support for Small Business	2043
Fort McMurray Wildfire Recovery.....	2043
Alberta Real Estate Association	2051
Rural Cellphone Service.....	2052
Pediatric Neuropsychiatric Disorders	2052
George Frederick John Gosbee.....	2052
Oral Question Period	
Tax Policies and Provincial Revenue	2043
Carbon Levy Questions to the Premier.....	2044
Rural Crime	2045
Provincial Fiscal Update.....	2045
School Nutrition Programs	2046
Emergency Medical Services and Worker Supports.....	2046
Tax Policies and Economic Development	2047
Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment.....	2047
Publication Ban on Children Who Die in Care.....	2048
Public Libraries	2048
Electricity Power Purchase Arrangement Lawsuit	2049
Agricultural Society Funding	2049
Calgary Southwest Ring Road Construction Concerns	2050
Carbon Levy Revenue and Rebates.....	2050
Tabling Returns and Reports	2052
Orders of the Day	2053
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 29 An Act to Reduce Cannabis and Alcohol Impaired Driving.....	2053
Bill 27 Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 2017.....	2066

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875