



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, June 20, 2019

Day 17

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 20, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through the love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a number of guests visiting. They include guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing: Sandra and Don Beach and Roy Dallmann.

Also joining us today are guests of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I invite you to rise when you hear your name and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly upon conclusion: Patrick Etokudo, Moses Onmonya, Oge Aghaegbuna, Juliet Ojo, and Aminat Popoola.

Also, guests of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who need no introduction to the Assembly: Personal Prince to the Emperor Walter; His Most Imperial and Sovereign Majesty Emperor XLIII-and-a-half Yeust Bobb; His Most Imperial and Sovereign Majesty Emperor Elect XLIII Davvid DragOn; and Her Most Imperial and Sovereign Majesty Empress XLIII Morgen Fair.

Welcome to all.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

National Indigenous Peoples Day

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for allowing me to wear this shirt in the House today. We acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground and gathering place, and we recognize all the many First Nation and Métis footsteps which have marked these lands for generations.

Today I stand to recognize an important day on our calendar. Tomorrow, June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day will be celebrated across the country, our province, and right here in our city. It's an honour to join in the celebrations that are being hosted throughout the month to celebrate the first people to inhabit this land. Many of the members in this Assembly will be doing just that in their own home constituencies tomorrow. I'd like to remind all Albertans that it's a time to honour the diverse history, language, and culture of the indigenous peoples, that strengthen Alberta.

We're proud to say that there are more than 258,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people who call Alberta home, many residing right here in Edmonton. While the growth of the population is exciting, it also brings challenges, but this government will work towards making life better, safer, and more engaging for our First Nations peoples. This incredible segment of our society contributes to the social, economic fabric of Alberta each and every day, making our province a great place to live and to work. Their history

and culture enriches our province. With the 48 First Nations and eight Métis settlements in Alberta, our government recognizes that indigenous people are an important part of both the history and the future of this province.

We're working towards including Alberta's First Nations as true partners in prosperity. Ours is a new approach that gives real meaning to the reconciliation where Alberta's First Nations are real owners of the resources on their land. Our government took this historic step to meet with all Albertan First Nations leadership within the first 50 days of our mandate. This clearly shows the priority we place on including our indigenous citizens as true owners of the resources on this land. We recognize the value of their input, the incredible energy and ideas they bring, and the positive and humble manner in which they live. The indigenous population is the youngest and the fastest growing segment of our population. We need their creative spirit, entrepreneurial skills, and desire to benefit from our economy to help us build a strong and free Alberta.

I encourage all Albertans to join me and the government in celebrating June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day, across our great province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address this House on tomorrow's important day. Join me. Hay-hay.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen to respond.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by acknowledging that we are on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground and gathering place. We recognize the many First Nations and Métis footsteps which have marked these lands for many generations.

I rise today on behalf of our caucus to speak about National Indigenous Peoples Day, on June 21. It is an honour to join in celebrations that are being hosted throughout the month to celebrate the first people to inhabit this land. This is a day for all Canadians to celebrate the diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples: the 48 First Nations, including the Beaver, Cree, Dene, Nakoda, and Blackfoot nations; the eight Métis settlements; and the Inuit people.

This is a day of celebration, but it's also a day to recognize that the path we are on is one of reconciliation. The history of settler involvement with indigenous people is a difficult one, involving residential schools, the '60s scoop, and other forms of oppression, but we can be part of the change and join in truth and reconciliation.

Our government was proud to focus on a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples in Alberta based on reconciliation, mutual respect, and co-operation. I'm proud to have been the first Minister of Indigenous Relations to have personally visited all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements. I am proud to have been in the first government in Alberta to deliver apologies for residential schools and the '60s scoop, to have been among the first to call for a national commission into murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, and to make the commitment to equal access to health care under Jordan's principle.

I'm proud that we were the only provincial government to put \$100 million to bringing clean water to reserves. We initiated the redesign of the K to 12 curriculum to better reflect indigenous history, knowledge, and traditions. The indigenous climate leadership program saw over \$80 million committed to building green energy solutions. We supported indigenous languages, including Calgary's first-ever indigenous languages resource centre. Our indigenous housing capital program made available \$120 million to increase affordable rental housing units for indigenous people in need. We significantly increased funding for native friendship centres in 21

Alberta communities, and we supported economic development to create \$600 million worth of wind projects.

We are proud of our steps toward reconciliation, but there's much more work to do. That is why I'm calling on this government to protect and continue this important work and to commit to true partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. I recommend that all members of this House and all Albertans get out on National Indigenous Peoples Day, wherever you are, and join the celebration. All summer long there are powwows, rodeos, and sun dance ceremonies throughout the province. Go with an open mind and open heart, and you will find your life enriched.

Thank you.

Members' Statements

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

World Refugee Day

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and speak before you all today on World Refugee Day. Ever since our province was founded, more than 100 years ago, Alberta has been blessed to be a bastion of security, freedom, and liberty. As our province and our nation have grown, so has the standard of living for those who choose to call Alberta home. Because of this, today we enjoy an impressive quality of life that would have been all but unimaginable to the first pioneers that established our province.

However, to this day there are still areas throughout the world that aren't afforded any of the luxuries that we take for granted. In fact, there are millions of innocent people that still endure armed conflicts and social upheavals on a scale that would seem incomprehensible to most Albertans. As a result, countless civilians whose lives have been irreversibly altered by these conflicts have little choice other than to leave and flee their homes. These refugees have few financial prospects, and often it is only their unwavering desire to create a better life for themselves and their families that pulls them through.

This is why today, Mr. Speaker, we seek to honour the trials and hardships of the refugees across the world, who are fighting to improve their own lives and the lives of the ones they love. World Refugee Day serves to remind us of the common humanity we all share.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

Climate Change

Ms Renaud: The level of carbon now in our atmosphere has not been seen in 12 million years. The carbon dioxide in our air is at an all-time high of 415 parts per million. This pollution is rapidly pushing the climate back to a state not seen since the Eocene epoch, more than 33 million years ago, when there was no ice on either pole. We have a paleorecord, so we know quite a bit about what life was like millions of years ago. It was not conducive to life as we know it.

Our scientists have for decades been warning us that we have caused global temperatures to rise too quickly. Peer-reviewed science tells us that 75 to 80 per cent of the permanent ice on our planet has melted in the last 35 years. They also tell us that the likelihood that there will be any permanent ice left in the Arctic after 2022 is essentially zero. The loss of ice will speed up the devastation as more heat is absorbed and sea levels rise.

We no longer have the luxury of time, contrary to what the current UCP government would like you to believe. We need aggressive policies and actions to ensure that rising global temperatures do not

exceed two degrees, and that requires swift and aggressive action. We need to do more than acknowledge we have a climate crisis. This new government will be remembered for their failure to take this crisis seriously because they're too busy plotting political strategies or paying special-interest groups and donors.

Children around the world are demanding action from decision-makers. Sixteen-year-old Greta Thunberg said it best, and I quote: in the year 2078 I will celebrate my 75th birthday; if I have children, maybe they will spend the day with me; maybe they will ask me about you; maybe they will ask why you didn't do anything while there still was time to act; you say you love your children above all else, yet you are stealing their future in front of their eyes. Unquote.

Are you listening, Mr. Premier?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

National Indigenous Peoples Day

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1996 the government of Canada declared June 21 of every year to be National Indigenous Peoples Day. The date of June 21 was chosen to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day in part because it corresponds to the summer solstice, the first day of summer, and the day with the longest light and midnight sun. As a northerner this is one of my favourite days of the year. It is also the day when many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups have traditionally celebrated their culture and heritage. It is a day to celebrate the diverse histories, languages, and cultures of indigenous people who have enriched our vibrant province.

I am proud to say that more than 258,000 First Nation, Métis, and Inuit call Alberta home. This is 1 in 6 Albertans who are indigenous Canadians, which makes Alberta's the third-highest population of indigenous peoples in any province in Canada. Indigenous peoples contribute to the social and economic life of Alberta each and every day, making our province a great place to live and work.

Throughout the month of June communities across Canada host events to celebrate the cultures, histories, achievements, and contributions of the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people to Canada. In fact, we are privileged to have our Legislature Building located just steps from Rosedale Flats, an important historical meeting ground for indigenous peoples that goes back almost 3,000 years. I encourage all of you to join our National Indigenous Peoples Day celebration and to attend other events taking place in your community and across this province. It is my honour to be able to participate tomorrow in the First Nation, Métis, Inuit Festival, hosted by the McMurray Métis, in my home riding of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche. It's a great opportunity to recognize and celebrate the dynamic heritage and culture of indigenous people in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, while we cannot change the past, we can strive to do better so that history does not repeat itself. With a sense of optimism we can develop a path forward together. [Remarks in Dene]

Vikings in the Streets Festival

Ms Lovely: Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the eighth annual Vikings in the Streets Festival in the town of Viking this past weekend. This festival celebrates and promotes Viking heritage to the world with a variety of family-friendly events ranging from face painting to Viking foods and crafts and including a lutefisk contest. Lutfisk, to those who don't know, is a traditional Norwegian dish which is dried and salted fish with lye and is gelatinous in nature. The name lutefisk literally means lye fish and is a traditional food eaten by those with Norwegian heritage at Christmas. I would like

to send my congratulations to the third-time-winning champion Nancy Tkacyk. I admire your technique. The festival also includes a chili cook-off, jail-and-bail fundraiser, a parade, and a variety of vendors as well as a big top show.

The event was well attended this year by the community, and the weather was exceptional, ensuring that everyone enjoyed themselves. Another highlight to the festival was Odin's Ravens, a group of locals who dress in traditional costume and participate in historical re-enactment, demonstrating combat techniques. The kids in the audience were invited to participate and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

The town of Viking was settled in 1909 by Sivert Hafso and Ole Sorenson from Norway. Those who settled and founded Viking did so in the spirit and tradition of Norwegians dating back to the Vikings, who pioneered the first shores of eastern Canada. The event was well received, and I was happy to deliver greetings on behalf of Premier Kenney and the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: I might just remind all hon. members that, no matter the circumstances, the use of names would be wildly inappropriate here inside the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a statement.

Education Funding and Bill 8

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the government caucus reminds this House frequently that they won the 2019 election, and they remind this House pretty frequently that their promise to Albertans was laser focused. They were focused on jobs, economy, and pipelines. They had some candidates forced out due to flirtation with hate groups, but still they vowed to Albertans that they would not be distracted on social issues.

Yet the Education minister has started to do exactly the opposite of what these honourable folks were elected to do. The education and training of our young people is surely one of the most fundamental economic issues for any family, but on this front this Education minister is silent and idle as school districts across the province hit the panic button and start laying off teachers and educational assistants. Alberta's kids are going to suffer, stuffed into overcrowded classrooms with classmates that have lost the developmental and behavioural supports that they rely on.

This minister is inexplicably oblivious to this urgent problem unfolding right now in every constituency across Alberta. All of her energy and activity has focused on the bizarre vendetta against gay kids, which has come to be known as Bill Hate. So I have to ask my honourable friends across the aisle: is this what you came here to do? How do you reconcile a laserlike economic mandate with a minister who is utterly ignoring a huge economic problem so she can focus on her own personal social agenda? Of course, it's not me that the members opposite will have to answer to. It's the parents that will be calling and writing and showing up at their offices and events this fall and for years to come. For those parents' sake and for their kids' sake I hope my honourable friends will tell this minister to put aside Bill Hate and focus on the issues they were elected for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I've dedicated my life to serving vulnerable people. Specifically, I spent 15 years serving the homeless in Calgary. I built and managed programs designed to help people overcome addiction and poverty. I've also built

programs that help people who have been pushed to the margins of society to rise up and find purpose, community, and hope.

This experience included managing a youth shelter. Over my time working in the shelter, I heard gut-wrenching stories of youth fleeing abuse and neglect. I also met many youth in my programs who identified as LGBTQ. I heard many stories about youth running away from home or being kicked out of home. My team and I worked extremely hard to make sure that all the youth in my program were safe and knew that they were loved. This included hiring many members of the LGBTQ community and designing programs specific for LGBTQ youth, but more than that, making sure that all the youth in my program were valued and felt safe to be themselves.

I can say with confidence that nobody in this House is happy about how these youth were treated by the people who should have loved them the most. That is why it is so very disappointing to hear members opposite hurl insults and insinuate that members of this government would ever want harm to come to these youth. It is why our government and our legacy parties stood united in support for GSA legislation. It is why our government is not supporting mandatory notification. The issues youth are facing in our schools are not black and white, and as such we cannot handcuff our teachers in a way that prevents them from seeking appropriate interventions in extreme cases. Any teacher I've talked to on this issue has cited this as an overreach and a conflict with their duty to care.

1:50

I will no longer stand for the NDP's fear and smear on this topic. The members to my left keep saying: the kids don't trust you. I would suggest their continuation in spreading misinformation about the heart of this government is to blame. I look forward to restoring that trust as these youth discover that the NDP's fear and smear is just that: a ploy to create fear amongst an already vulnerable group.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Oral Question Period

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

Parliamentary Debate and Public Discourse

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to give the government members a second to pop in their earplugs. My colleagues and I watched in shock last night as the Premier limited debate on his bad-faith bargaining bill, and then he proceeded to pass out earplugs and insult working Albertans with his childish and arrogant stunt. Cutting wages for nearly 200,000 public-sector workers and then literally plugging your ears so you don't have to hear the pain that it causes is spineless. Will the Premier apologize for this disrespect that he showed working Albertans last night?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this is a ridiculous question from the deputy Leader of the Opposition. What is so outrageous is the behaviour that continues to come from the NDP in this House. I get letters almost every day at my constituency offices or on Facebook about the appalling behaviour of the opposition; for example, just the other day when one of their hon. members inside this place compared Bill 9 to slavery. So, through you to that hon. member: will he stand in this House and finally apologize for that behaviour? Here's the reality. The NDP keep bringing decorum down in this place, and it's appalling.

Ms Hoffman: Speaking of social media, it turns out this Premier's immature leadership is setting a bad example for his MLAs, too. When asked by a constituent on social media to explain how he could possibly support the bad-faith bargaining bill, the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane provided no response and promptly blocked the constituent. That's right, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has now taught his MLAs that they're above accountability to their own constituents. To the Premier: will you pledge to do better from here on and set a better example for your MLAs?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Alberta, when he was Leader of the Opposition, brought the level of decorum to the highest levels in this place, unlike the current deputy Leader of the Opposition, who continues to bring it down. Speaking as a former deputy Leader of the Opposition, as you were, too, Mr. Speaker, I've been appalled to watch the current deputy Leader of the Opposition continue to allow her caucus to disrespect this Chamber so much, to disrespect the people of Alberta, to disrespect the people that elected us to come to this Chamber. The behaviour of the NDP inside this Chamber is appalling. It's ridiculous. They should stand up inside this Chamber and apologize for what they've been doing.

Ms Hoffman: Standing up for our constituents isn't appalling; it's our job. Listening to what those constituents have to say is the government's job, so I have to say that what I find beyond reproach is saying that we aren't allowed to bang our desks, but what? We'll bring in time allocation. We'll plug our ears, literally, and we'll fail to listen to the nearly 200,000 public-sector workers who this government is attacking. What is the government so afraid of, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody from the government plugged their ears during debate. That's a ridiculous accusation by the hon. member. She should do better than that. This Chamber deserves better than that. Her position deserves better than that.

Let's talk about the Member for St. Albert, who last night accused me of being intoxicated in this place. Is that the type of behaviour that the Leader of the Opposition expects from her caucus? Is that the type of behaviour that Albertans expect from the Official Opposition? Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition has an important job to do in this place, and so far they're failing Albertans at that job. They should stop their ridiculous behaviour and get to work for the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Bill 9 Debate

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bad-faith bargaining bill, Bill 9, will allow this government to rip up contracts and impose new ones on 200,000 Albertans who do some of our society's most important jobs. The Minister of Finance has tried to claim that the omnibus clause in his bill doesn't do that. In fact, he's accused us of lying. Last night while Albertans were sleeping and this government was ramming the bill through, I tried to amend the bill to remove this clause. To the minister: if the clause isn't intended to be used, why didn't you take it out when given the chance?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody was ramming the bill through the Legislature. In fact, this Legislature has sat since Monday well into the night working very hard on this important piece of legislation. Now, what did the Official Opposition do while we were debating that legislation starting Monday night? Played silly games, trying to adjourn debate, trying to be able to go home, spent most of the time complaining about the fact that they had to

work late because they wanted to go home instead of doing the important work. Their constituents and people that are concerned about this legislation, that expect them to do a job should be very disappointed in their behaviour because they spent most of their time doing anything but actually working on the bill.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has rammed through Bill 9 in the dead of night to interrupt ongoing wage discussions that are happening right now. The government says that they want to delay these talks by four months to allow time for their so-called blue-ribbon panel to assess the budget, but that panel's report is due in August. So my colleague from Edmonton-Manning reasonably proposed to move discussions to that month, too. To the minister: did you oppose her amendment to try and buy yourself more time to figure out how deeply you're going to cut the pay of public-sector workers?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we've been clear all along. The intent of Bill 9 is simply to delay wage arbitration until this government can hear from the MacKinnon panel, develop a thoughtful, prudent path forward to bring this province back to balance. Albertans expect this from government, and we will deliver.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People who represent public-sector workers sat in this House for hours last night watching as this government rammed through the bad-faith bargaining bill. They came here concerned for their members and about the breakneck speed at which this government forced the bill through the Legislature. To the Premier: I know you wanted to plug your ears when we were telling you about how bad your bill was, but did you or any member of your caucus attempt to talk to the folks who were here last night? In fact, have you talked to any of the 200,000 Albertans that you are directly impacting?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of our Premier, who sat inside this Legislature throughout the debate on Bill 9, spent his time in even speaking to this piece of legislation and articulating why our government is headed this direction, stood here and had a great discussion with the opposition when they would discuss it. But, again, let's get back to actually what the opposition has done the last week. They've done everything but debate the bill. They spent most of their time talking about anything but the bill. The constituents that they claim to be trying to help inside this House should be very, very disappointed in the Official Opposition because they did nothing for them the last week. It's very disappointing.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-North West.

Postsecondary Worker Contract Negotiations

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that the most odious Bill 9 has been exposed for what it really is, I think it's important to trace it back to a letter from this government sent to Advanced Education employees, stating that the government is considering "all available options... including legislation." This is a full-blown attack on the public service, including thousands of postsecondary workers, but we have yet to hear a peep from the Minister of Advanced Education. I'm wondering if the minister can explain the implications of breaking legal contracts with postsecondary workers.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Again the opposition continues to mischaracterize things inside this House. It's disappointing that they always do that. This is their go-to with Team Angry. Here's the reality. We have a situation that has been inherited from the NDP government, who put us on track for \$100 billion in debt, absolutely devastated the Alberta economy. We ran on a platform to get us on a path to balance. The Finance minister and all ministers in this cabinet are taking time to make sure that we get this right for Albertans. Why? Because that's what we promised Albertans. I want to assure Albertans, through you, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to keep that promise.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are several contracts in postsecondary education that are well past due. Bill 9 breaks the law and removes the rights for postsecondary workers to collectively bargain. This government has literally cut off debate and plugged its ears, refusing to listen to why it's critical that they negotiate in good faith. I can feel the lawsuits coming. Can the Minister of Finance tell us how much this illegal action will cost, considering legal fees, fines, likely labour disruption, and the negative impact to the good reputation of Alberta's colleges and universities?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Bill 9 is simply about deferring, temporarily postponing arbitration hearings for public-sector workers. This is about a government listening to Albertans. This is about a government taking time to ensure that we have all the information to make the best decisions on behalf of Albertans and the public sector. The previous government sent us on a trajectory to \$100 billion of accumulated debt. That is unacceptable to Albertans.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government is committed to contract discussions with Bow Valley College, NAIT, SAIT, the Alberta college of art and design, Athabasca University, and many others and then just a few weeks later they draw up legislation that not only delays these contract talks, but they won't even commit to whether they'll ever actually occur, to the Premier, the quarterback of this massive pickpocketing scheme on workers: don't you think it might be just a little bit awkward to show up on campuses when you made it abundantly clear that you cannot be trusted?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, speaking of pickpocketing bills, let's talk about the NDP's bill when they brought in the carbon tax, the largest pickpocketing bill in the history of this Legislature, something that they never campaigned on, something that they hid from Albertans while they were campaigning, and then came into this Assembly and forced it through on Albertans, a bill that was all economic pain, no environmental gain, that not just punished our economy and the businesses that are in it but went after fixed-income seniors, went after homeless shelters, went after food banks, went after schools and swimming pools, and attacked our community on a daily basis. We will not be lectured by that hon. member on anything, quite frankly.

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

Edmonton Medical Laboratory Infrastructure

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "The physical state of laboratory facilities in Edmonton has long been a... concern... The inability to replace aging equipment and to keep up with

innovation was the most significant issue... brought forward through the stakeholder engagement process." Those are quotes from the Health Quality Council of Alberta's recommendations on the future of lab services in Alberta. Our government moved to address them by building the Edmonton clinical lab hub. This government just announced that they are cancelling that project, with no solution other than maintaining the risky privatized model that's failed us for years. To this minister: what are you thinking? Is it worth putting people's health at risk to maintain your political posturing?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member: did he just admit that his government failed to invest in infrastructure during their time in government? When it comes to this Alberta lab project, promise made, promise kept. This was a key campaign commitment of ours. We're pleased also to announce that we will be stopping the plans of the previous government to nationalize DynaLife. We will make decisions about health infrastructure based on what's best for patients, not based on an ideological drive to nationalize lab services.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Claiming savings for cancelling this project is like claiming savings by not fixing your roof or buying your children's insulin.

The Health Quality Council of Alberta was clear that there is a pressing need for "new laboratory infrastructure to meet the urgent needs in Edmonton," which we were building. To the Minister of Health: do you have an alternate plan to deliver the lab testing Albertans depend on for their health and their well-being, or have you simply jumped without a parachute because the Premier told you to?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, let's remember what the NDP planned for this site: first, to displace student housing; second, to build a giant parkade next to a train station here in Edmonton; third, to take pathologists out of hospitals, all to nationalize lab services. Let's start making decisions in the best interests of patients.

Mr. Shepherd: As always with this government, Mr. Speaker, no plan, stale talking points.

The Health Quality Council stated that our government's commitment to fund and plan for a new Edmonton lab hub was "very well received by the stakeholder community." There has been over a decade's worth of reports and reviews, all reaching the same conclusion, that we need new lab infrastructure for Edmonton and northern Alberta. We had it under construction. Albertans were building it. To the minister: will you tell this House how many jobs are now lost as a result of your decision, or will that come in due course?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, every patient care decision is going to either require an X-ray or lab work. Imagine all the patient care decisions in this province which were compromised by the NDP in the timeliness and the quality of that lab work. I look forward to the hon. member rising in this Assembly and apologizing to Albertans for the previous government's decisions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has a question.

Film Industry Tax Credit

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You might not know this, but southern Alberta has a steady, growing film industry. It is an

industry with huge potential. But despite the desire of many companies to shoot here, they're held back by our current system of government grants. As such, in our platform the government promised that we would transition provincial grants such as the screen-based production grant into a competitive tax credit like those used in other jurisdictions. Can the minister explain to this House how this will attract jobs and investment in the film industry into Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The amazing thing about some of these incentives is that if the incentives are there, the productions will come. We have crews that are ready to work. There's spinoff to tourism, transfer of skilled jobs, which is actually a very important piece of the puzzle given the economic downturn at this point in time. Also, one of the things that's really important within this industry is that for every dollar that is invested, there's a \$3.50 return to the Alberta economy. The tax credit actually gives an incredible ability for predictability and stable funding.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-MacLeod.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government failed to do necessary consultations when it considered changes to funding programs such as this and given that the previous government was notorious for failing to consult Albertans in general and given that the previous government dropped the ball specifically as it pertains to consultations over changes to the film industry in Alberta, can the minister tell us whether or not she did the necessary consultations concerning the changes to the grant program?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much for the question. I'm very pleased to say that at this point in time we've actually met with well over 30 stakeholders. Alberta has the absolute pleasure of holding the Alberta media festival, and through that, there's an ability to actually have conversations with people around the world. Alberta is open for business. People are really excited about being able to film here. But we want to make sure that we get this right. There is a tremendous amount of consultation that needs to happen. We're really looking forward to that. So we will continue to consult to make sure that we get this right.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, my last question is once again for the minister. Given that the government committed to the implementation of this tax credit in favour of grants and given that the minister plans to follow through with the results of her consultation, can the minister tell this House what her timeline is for rolling out the new tax credit?

The Speaker: The minister of culture.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much. Actually, I think my answer for question 2 will probably answer this a little bit. Because of the necessity for consultations and because the industry is so incredibly diverse, we are looking at making sure that this tax credit is done appropriately. We're looking to have these consultations over the summer and into the fall, and hopefully we'll be rolling out legislation here in the near future, within the next year.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a question.

Climate Change Strategy

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to keep my words soft and sweet so as not to damage the hearing of the members opposite, that they're so eager to protect. The Premier has been busy criss-crossing the country, campaigning for the federal Conservative leader, Andrew Scheer, and seemingly setting himself up to run for Prime Minister one day. He's also indicated his support for Scheer's climate plan. I want the members of the executive benches to tell us what aspects of the federal Conservative plan to tackle climate change they support.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The biggest aspect that I support right now is that it does not have a carbon tax, unlike what the NDP and the Liberal Party want to do. The NDP and their ally Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party want to go with a carbon tax to deal with climate change, which is all economic pain and no environmental gain. It does nothing to deal with the issue. From what I understand of Andrew Scheer's climate change plan, it has no carbon tax. We support that. As our Premier has said and as our caucus and our cabinet have said, we will fight the Justin Trudeau carbon tax both at the ballot box and in the court system if that's what's required.

2:10

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question was about what aspects of the Conservatives' plan they do support.

Given that the Scheer plan states that it will collaborate with indigenous people on undertaking climate mitigation and adaptation projects, will the government follow the federal puppet master, work with indigenous communities, and commit to maintaining existing Alberta indigenous mitigation and adaptation programs like the indigenous retrofit program, the indigenous green employment program, and the indigenous solar program?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to answer this question again. Of course we'll commit to working with indigenous communities and consulting with them. I'm really proud of our Premier and our government, who were able to reinstate meetings with all of the nations just a few weeks ago, something that the NDP, when they were in power, shut down, much to the disappointment of indigenous communities inside the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, through you to indigenous communities, I want to assure them that the Alberta government is committed to consulting with them and working with them, going forward, to better their communities but also to better Alberta. We're excited to talk more about that, I'm sure, when the hon. member follows up with another question.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that those programs the hon. member mentioned were developed in consultation with the indigenous community here in Alberta and given that Scheer's plan also pledges to provide money for homeowners to retrofit their homes to be more energy efficient, much like our plan did, will the government commit to following the plan from Scheer, much like he follows his campaign path all across Canada, and maintain funding for Energy Efficiency Alberta's existing residential retrofit rebate program?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we've already committed to our direction. We're going to be focused on the TIER program. We'll have more to say about that over the summer as we begin to unroll

that. But I can tell you another thing: what we will not commit to is going the NDP route, which is hiring Ontario companies to come install light bulbs and faucets inside our homes. We are not focused on taxing hard-working Alberta families, like the NDP and the federal Liberals do, which is all economic pain and no environmental gain. Instead, we focus on working on technology, working with our industry, and making sure that we continue to be the best energy-producing place in the entire world.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night hundreds of Albertans from all over this province attended the rally to save GSAs right here at this Legislature. They had a clear message for this Premier: leave our kids alone. But still the Premier carries on with his Bill Hate, which will destroy GSAs and out LGBTQ youth. What's more is that he didn't even bother to attend the rally or acknowledge the young people gathered outside. To the Premier: what were you doing last night that was so important that you couldn't attend the rally? Buying earplugs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We've been very, very clear that once a GSA, QSA, or an inclusion group is requested, it is not optional; it has to be allowed. I will trust the word of the independent Privacy Commissioner over the scare tactics of the NDP any day. We have always been there to support all our students.

Thank you.

Member Irwin: You know who's scared? The thousands of queer and trans kids who worry that they'll be homeless or worse if they're outed without their consent.

Given that Lea Cheeseman, a student from Calgary, came all the way to this Legislature to make one last attempt to be heard by this government and she called on this government to scrap this hateful bill in order to protect her and her peers from harm, to the minister. Not listening appears to be a pattern of this government. Why are you refusing to listen to the thousands of young voices that are telling you that Bill Hate will make them unsafe?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government has been extremely clear that we will not be outing kids. Our government will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited students in Canada, period.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that former teacher and school trustee Terry Reilly, a decades-long card-carrying member of the Progressive Conservative Party until this Premier invited extremists and homophobes into his party and his government, travelled all the way from Medicine Hat to say that, quote, protection for the rights of student privacy is our duty, is there any member of this cabinet that is willing to stand apart from the Premier or the Minister of Education and actually honour this duty?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and this cabinet and all of this government caucus continue to stand for LGBTQ rights. We continue to stand with all Albertans. Most importantly, I want to assure LGBTQ students, through you, that we will continue to have the strongest statutory protections in the entire country. We will continue to stand for Bill 10. We will continue to stand and make sure GSAs are protected inside schools. That's a fact. I know they're hearing a lot of fearmongering from the NDP. That's what you get from Team Angry. But I promise we are going to keep care of it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order is noted both at 2:13 and 2:14.

The Member for Calgary-West is asking a question.

Tourism Industry

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy has been suffering, and we all know that there are many industries with potential for growth in our province. Now, tourism is one sector that has huge potential in our province, and Calgary is just a short trip from the Rocky Mountains. What is the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism doing to grow the tourism sector for our province's largest city?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is dedicated to growing the tourism industry across Alberta, which is why we are developing a 10-year tourism strategy with the goal of doubling tourism investment in our province by 2030. As a gateway to the Rockies and its beautiful scenery Calgary will be a key part of that strategy due to its size, strategic location, and its need for economic recovery after the disastrous reign of the NDP.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Now, given that the tourism sector was neglected under the previous government and they failed to create an environment that allowed for investment or growth and they created huge, burdensome bureaucracies and regulatory regimes, what is the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism doing to help private-sector tourism operators?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again, thank you to the member for the question. Our government has already taken action to make things easier for private-sector tourism operators by cutting burdensome red tape and extending tourism tenures for tourism and commercial recreation operators' leases from 25 years to up to 60 years. This change puts us in line with British Columbia and the national parks and will make it easier for operators to secure long-term financing and will stimulate private-sector investment in our tourism industry, which in turn will make us more competitive.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Calgary has untapped potential as a tourist destination and given that it is a world-class city that, unfortunately, has faced four years of neglect under the previous government,

what is the minister doing to promote Calgary as a tourism destination?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As I mentioned in my previous answer, we are cutting the red tape that burdens the tourism industry. One example is the changes to public land leases and lowering taxes for tourism operators with our repeal of the carbon tax and the job-creation tax cut. We are focused on making private-sector tourism a cornerstone of our economy, and we are working hard every day to develop a plan that will grow the industry in Calgary and across the province.

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question.

Educational Curriculum Review

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Teachers, parents, academics, and students have been working hard for years on a much-needed modernization of the K to 12 curriculum. Tens of thousands of Albertans provided their input, and hundreds of thousands of students are relying on a new curriculum to prepare them for a changing world. This Premier cares more about his ego than our kids. He said he would take the new curriculum and put it through the shredder. To the Education minister: will you first apologize to teachers, professionals, and volunteers who have worked tirelessly on this new curriculum while your boss dumped on their work for his political stunt?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Our government is pausing the curriculum to review and to consult more broadly with stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and other subject-matter experts. We want to ensure that all of Alberta's new curriculum focuses on teaching essential knowledge and ensuring students develop foundational competencies and job-ready skills for life. That's what we're committed to; that's what we're going to do.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the curriculum process is now on pause or shredded and given that field testing of the new curriculum that so many people worked on was to begin this fall and given that the current curriculum is more than 30 years old – it predates the Internet, for crying out loud – to the Education Minister: what are you now planning when it comes to developing the new curriculum, and how will you remove your personal biases from it? Because, frankly, those really scare me.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The consultations are actually going to begin this summer. I've heard from my department. They're actually refreshed, and they're feeling very positive about the direction that we're going to be going in. I look forward to sharing that as soon as I possibly can.

Thank you.

2:20

Ms Hoffman: Given that the Premier wants to roll back rights for LGBTQ youth and that many of his views seem to be stuck in the past and given that he often takes advice from extremists like John Carpay, to the Premier, then: will you tell Albertans who exactly is

working on the curriculum, and is the reason why you're stalling because you'd prefer our province was stuck in the 1980s?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again you continue to see Team Angry, particularly from the deputy leader of the NDP. Nobody on this side of the House, particularly the Premier, is going to be lectured by an hon. member who came to this place and called Albertans sewer rats. It's absolutely ridiculous. She should stand up and apologize for that behaviour inside this House, which she did, but not really because then she went out and said that, oh, that was not what she really meant. That's what you get from the NDP. They don't care about Albertans. They don't like Albertans. That hon. member showed it that day when she called every Albertan a sewer rat. Think about that.

Education Funding

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand in this House every day for our students, our teachers, our parents. The government caucus should be doing the same. Instead, Wetaskiwin Composite is going to see their career and technology class sizes double, and they're being forced to lay off their literacy and numeracy specialists because this government is cutting the classroom improvement fund. To the minister: is this what modernizing our education system looks like? Because that's what you're claiming to be doing.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I've actually been meeting with numerous boards. This morning I met with the CBE and they were able to confirm for me that the reports of 300 job losses are false. Their plan is to keep teachers in front of students and maintain existing staff levels. I'm happy to share that. I'm hearing positive things from our boards.

Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the teachers in the Parkland school district that I've been talking to are worried that layoffs will put staff in danger, that simply not having the educational assistants to support students with behavioural needs actually puts teachers at risk, that apparently assaults on teachers are on the rise and layoffs are planned for this fall because the Education minister keeps bungling the budget, to the minister: should teachers really have to worry about getting beat up at school because you want to cut their budget further?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I've also met with Edmonton Catholic, Edmonton public, and Calgary Catholic in this past week. None of those concerns were raised to me. Individual school districts are in the best position to address any questions about their specific budgets, but our government's commitment to funding education has been clear. Enrolment growth is being accounted for and funded.

Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks for bringing up Edmonton Catholic because when I met with their teachers, they said that special education funding was being cut by 9 per cent. Given that we know that the classroom improvement fund that was introduced by our government is now being killed – the minister admitted to that in supplementary supply. It was designed to specifically target students with complex needs. To the minister: will you admit that

students with severe learning disabilities take a back seat in your mind when you're looking at ways to give billions of dollars to wealthy corporations?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The hon. member knows, having been a former trustee herself, that it is the boards and the school districts that make the funding decisions, not the teachers. Therefore, I am quite confident that our boards know that we have continued enrolment growth funding. We are going to be building schools. That has been very clear. I'm not sure what else she needs to hear.

Nurse Practitioners

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, recently a constituent of mine named Lynette Adamson brought to my attention how nurse practitioners are underutilized in all areas of care in our health care system despite their ability to provide care outcomes equal to their physician colleagues. As a nurse practitioner herself Lynette is vastly concerned about how limited her ability is to serve patients. In the government's platform it pledged to integrate nurse practitioners into the health care system. Can the Minister of Health tell my constituents how he plans on doing that?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we campaigned on a commitment to strengthen our publicly funded health system, and that includes making better use of the skills of nurse practitioners, an important and underused asset. We recently launched a new nurse practitioner support program for our 41 primary care networks. The program will oversee the hiring of 50 additional nurse practitioners over two years across Alberta. We're also expanding the services that nurse practitioners can provide. They can now set and reset bone fractures, as an example, and courtesy and provisional registrants can now provide the same range of care as fully registered nurse practitioners.

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

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that wait times are often from there not being enough doctors and given that nurse practitioners are able to perform many of the same roles as doctors, from writing prescriptions to ordering tests to referring patients to a specialist, and given that our government was elected on a mandate to improve wait times in the health care system and given that rural communities suffer from longer wait times than urban communities, can the minister tell this place how nurse practitioners can help lower wait times?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a few ways, especially in primary care. They can, as an example, help address long-standing issues with lack of access to physicians, not instead of physicians but working with them as a team, and that means offering after-hours access and being available in underserved communities. That includes smaller and remote communities but also parts of our big cities. Nurse practitioners can help in other ways as well. They can provide urgent care to reduce crowding in emergency, provide triage for specialty services, and support acute care in a variety of ways.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental is to the Minister of Health. Given that one of the largest barriers to Albertans in accessing the services provided by nurse practitioners is the lack of a stable, reliable funding formula for nurse practitioners and given that the lack of funding applies to all sectors of Alberta Health Services in hospitals, long-term care, and, most importantly for my constituents, in rural communities, my constituents want to know why this is. Can the minister please inform them?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the member that budget constraints will not stop us from moving forward and adding more nurse practitioners in our health system. That is a platform commitment, and we will deliver on it, Mr. Speaker.

Integrating nurse practitioners into the health system is about more than just how we pay them. Nurse practitioners are not just substitutes for doctors; they're nurses who bring their own strengths to the team. The team needs to adapt and make good use of their skills. That's happening, and our government is going to make sure it continues, as we promised Albertans in our platform.

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

United Conservative Party Fundraising

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago I raised a concern in this House about the UCP using their government positions to raise money for their party. I was very relieved to hear the Government House Leader say that they had "indicated to the party that we would prefer in the future not to use our titles that we have in this place," so you can imagine my confusion when I was shown again a UCP invitation dated June 3 advertising that the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction would be a special guest speaker. My question is to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. Did you approve this invite using your government title for this partisan event?

The Speaker: I might just remind hon. members that I didn't hear a particular topic of government policy there. I am more than happy to hear from the Government House Leader if he'd like to respond, but I wouldn't expect him to do so.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear any government policy there . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mr. Jason Nixon: . . . but I would like to talk about some government policy. I'm really happy the hon. member brought up red tape and, in particular, the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, who is doing a really good job of keeping the promises that we've made to Albertans, working on cutting red tape and helping to get Albertans back to work, focusing on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. Big contrast to what the NDP did when they were in power, which focused on taxing Albertans, causing job creators to have to shut down, starting the largest unemployment in the history of this province, and driving us towards the largest debt in our history.

Ms Sweet: Well, given that we're talking about government positions and government ethics and given that the Government House Leader assured this House twice that the UCP practice of using taxpayer-paid government positions for their partisan gains

was over and given that this invitation was sent well after he made this pledge, again to the Government House Leader: is it going to be the policy of the UCP to promise one thing in this House and do the opposite outside?

The Speaker: Much better.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member did a good job on changing that back to government policy. I want to congratulate her on that. She is correct. I made it clear inside this Assembly that we have informed the party that we expect them to not use our Executive Council titles. The Ethics Commissioner has confirmed that that's not required, but we think that was the right thing to do. I saw the hon. member bring it up yesterday, and I have sent a note to the party to ask them what has taken place in this case. I am assured by the hon. member that he did not approve that message, and we'll wait to hear back from the party, but our direction has been clear in the future.

2:30

Ms Sweet: Well, given, Mr. Speaker, it's always great to hear the Government House Leader think that I can learn and given that I wrote about this issue to the Ethics Commissioner and given that in her response the commissioner cautioned the UCP about the use of government titles in their party fundraisers and warned that the use is considered inappropriate but it's not strictly prohibited by the Conflicts of Interest Act, to the Government House Leader: will you respect the advice of an Ethics Commissioner, apologize to this House for continuing this inappropriate practice, and commit to finally stopping the use of your government positions as fundraising draws for the UCP?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I've already addressed that question, but now that we're on the topic of the Ethics Commissioner and the things that she's written, she's actually called on that hon. member and her party to stop abusing the Ethics Commissioner's office for partisan gain. She does that in the exact same letter. She's referred to that hon. member many times, calling her out for playing political games with the Ethics Commissioner's office, so I'm curious: is she going to take the Ethics Commissioner's advice? We have. Maybe she should start.

Regulation Reduction

Mr. Nielsen: A few weeks ago, when the Premier and the minister of red tape announced the introduction of Bill 4, the Premier and the minister bragged about having cut 17 regulations. At the time, the media pointed out that these eliminated regulations had not been posted anywhere publicly. This lack of transparency is a little concerning. To the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: is there a reason these regulations haven't been posted publicly, and what are you hiding from Albertans?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The question was actually brought up by the press when we did our announcement, and we told them that it was an oversight, that we would try to be able to take care of it as quick as possible, and that's what we're doing.

Mr. Nielsen: Given this minister's failure to be public with Albertans about the 17 regulations he's already cut and given that the Premier's commitment to post these eliminated regulations online appears to have gone by the wayside – another promise made, promise broken, I guess – and given that Albertans have a

right to know what this minister is doing, to the minister of red tape. This is your third chance in as many weeks. Can you please identify for this House just one piece of red tape you've cut?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. We've already stated that we are going to do everything we can to be able to make sure that it's on the website. There's no conspiracy. This is Team Angry continually saying that there is a nefarious approach this government is taking. We're trying to work through the process to make sure that Albertans are seeing what we're doing with red tape reduction, and we'll make sure we do that.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, given that this minister appears to struggle with transparency and given that the minister wields a great deal of power and that there is a potential to cut red tape that actually is helpful when it comes to keeping Albertans healthy and safe, to the minister: will you commit to a simple task of tabling a copy of every regulation you have cut in this House before the end of Routine today, and if not, what are you hiding?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's important that the member knows that the first thing we did to be able to cut some red tape is get rid of the carbon tax. That's a \$1.4 billion hit to Albertans that we were able to get rid of. Stay tuned. We're going to be making sure that we get rid of at least a third. I've got my scissors out. We're going to make sure that Albertans are the ones that we're protecting.

The Speaker: The Member for Sherwood Park has a question.

Investment in Alberta and Job Creation

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For Albertans to prosper here at home, we must be deeply engaged abroad. On April 16, 2019, Albertans decisively elected a UCP government on the mandate of reversing record capital flight caused by damaging big-government NDP policies. Will the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism explain what her ministry is doing to signal to the world that Alberta is once again open for business?

The Speaker: The minister of economic development and trade.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Under the NDP, capital fled Alberta at a devastating rate. Many companies and communities were crippled by their job-killing policies and their tax increases. Our government has already taken common-sense steps to bring investment back to Alberta with our repeal of the carbon tax and the job-creation tax cut, and I and my ministry are working hard every day to let the world know that Alberta is once again open for business.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the minister. Given that investment declined under the NDP due to increased taxes and regulations, hurting Alberta's economy and profile abroad, and given that strong engagement with the Asia Pacific region, which contains 60 per cent of the world's population and 9 of our 12 Alberta international offices, is particularly important to making Alberta prosperous again, can the minister please elaborate on what her ministry is doing to raise Alberta's profile in and attract investment from the Asia Pacific?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development and trade.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is absolutely dedicated to increasing our profile in the Asia Pacific and to attract investment from our trading partners there. As I mentioned before, I recently returned from a trade mission to Japan and South Korea on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, where I showcased the safe, reliable, high-quality goods of our agrifood sector as well as our tourism and energy sectors. Japan, in particular, is our third-largest agricultural trading partner, and South Korea is hungry for our energy resources.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given our commitment to get Albertans back to work, in part by attracting international investment from big economies such as Japan, China, and South Korea, and given that Alberta must be competitive and engage internationally to ensure prosperity here at home, will the minister please explain how attracting international investment will make Alberta prosperous once more?

The Speaker: The minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. Alberta has some of the highest quality products in the world, and by attracting international investment, we can ensure that those products are getting to new markets and expanding our presence in existing markets. The United States will always be our closest friend, ally, and trading partner, but we need to grow our exports to the rest of the world. Our government is working hard every day to make that happen.

The Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Highway 28 Capital Plan

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Highway 28 stretches from Edmonton all the way to Cold Lake. While the section from Edmonton to highway 63 intersection has seen very much-needed repairs lately, the section from highway 63 to Bonnyville and Cold Lake has been neglected despite multiple requests from local MLAs and local municipalities. To the Minister of Transportation. Under the NDP improvements to this section of highway 28 did not even show up in the three-year plan. Will you be reassessing the priority plan and look into this vital stretch of highway in my constituency?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. I'd like the hon. member to know that highway 28 had a corridor study recently completed. The study identified a number of improvements that could be done along the corridor, and they include intersection improvements, passing lane opportunities, and places where safety rest areas could be added. The study also looked at the possible twinning between Bonnyville and Cold Lake. As is so often the case, this is amongst our capital planning and budget planning process, and we are . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Minister, for the answer. Given that highway 28 is one of the only routes connecting one of the busiest and most productive bitumen-producing areas of the province and given that this area has contributed significantly to the economy of not only the province of Alberta but the entire country,

Minister, would you agree that areas like this that continue to drive our economy deserve a second look and perhaps some special consideration when it comes to setting infrastructure priorities?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. The hon. member is correct. Cold Lake and area are very important and big contributors to Alberta's economy. One project of the ones I mentioned is now being considered. That's pavement between highway 63 and Waskatenau. There is also, I'd like the hon. member to know, the possibility that we're considering a roundabout at the intersections of highway 28 and 831. Other rehabilitation projects are also in the works and under consideration.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you again for the answer, Minister. Given that 4 Wing Cold Lake is the busiest fighter base in Canada and depends on highway 28 for fuel delivery as well as pretty much everything delivered by truck and given that 4 Wing hosts Maple Flag, an exercise attended by our allied forces from around the world, Minister, will you agree to drive up to my constituency this summer, preferably on your motorcycle so you can get the full experience of the highway, and visit this busy highway that is often the first impression of international visitors to our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see an hon. member so proud of the area that he represents. There's certainly much to be proud of, with 4 Wing and the military up in Cold Lake. As the member knows, it's always my pleasure to meet people and discuss transportation projects and priorities. It's also my pleasure, whenever I can, to get on the motorcycle, and it's certainly my pleasure to go for perogies and to visit good people up there. I'll tell the hon. member that I would love to talk to him. I'll do my best to get it in the schedule and make that happen.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

2:40

Trade with Asia

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much. In November of 2016 our NDP government led the largest trade delegation in Alberta's history to China, with more than 86 different businesses and entities. Mr. Speaker, between 2016 and 2019 trade with China increased by 25 per cent, or over a billion dollars. Companies like Nelson remediation have secured tens of millions of dollars in contracts because they participated in trade missions with our government: not my words; their words. To the minister of economic development: how many businesses did you bring on your mission, and how are you demonstrating a collaborative team Alberta approach the way our government did?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is open for business, and our government is taking action to expand and diversify our trade market. While in Japan and South Korea we met with more than 30 groups of government officials, industry stakeholders, and front-line workers, and we had positive, productive meetings. The NDP went on multiple trade missions as well. On our trade missions we brought people from the canola industries, beef industry, and pork industry as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As did we. I asked how many businesses accompanied you.

Given that our NDP government introduced the export expansion program because we know that we need to support Alberta businesses to access new markets and given that opening up new markets for Alberta businesses means more jobs here at home, higher revenues, and new supply chains and given that this program helped companies like Absolute Combustion, who's now doing business in more than 10 different countries, to the same minister: will you stand up today and assure Alberta businesses that this program will continue?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The biggest relationship that we could have had with China was the Northern Gateway pipeline, which they killed. Referring back to my mission to Japan and South Korea, we had people with us from the Canola Council of Canada, the Canadian Canola Growers Association, Cereals Canada, and Pulse Canada, just to name a few.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta canola producers have been hit hard by China's ban and given that this government recently completed a trade mission to open markets, although I find it fascinating the minister didn't invite business leaders, and given that canola farmers really need our help, not empty words or politicians playing the blame game, to the minister of agriculture: what specific supports are you giving to Alberta farmers to offset their losses in dollars, or are you just going to blame us, the federal government, or anyone else you can pass the buck on to?

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

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. We do have a suite of programs, BRM programs, business risk management programs, that farmers will be able to get access to this year. But I do find it a bit rich coming from this member, who, I think it was a couple weeks ago, in this House came up and said that if farmers or any businesses were having difficulties paying \$3,000 or a few extra thousand dollars a month in carbon taxes, they should look at their management and they should look at their own business plan. That is just disrespectful, and it's surprising he asks these types of questions. Thanks.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to the rest of daily Routine. I encourage everyone who has other engagements to exit quickly and drive safely.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Bill 12 Royalty Guarantee Act

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to seek leave to introduce Bill 12, the Royalty Guarantee Act.

This legislation would deliver on a commitment that ensures that the royalty structure in place when a project is permitted and when investment decisions are made will have no major changes for at least 10 years. This legislation would strengthen Alberta's ability to compete in the global market while maintaining the flexibility needed to address significant market conditions and technology

changes. This guarantee can be legislated by an amendment to the existing Mines and Minerals Act, ensuring that the day-to-day business of the royalty structure would not change. By ensuring that the rules can't change halfway through the game, we will signal that Alberta's oil and gas sector is a stable place to invest and create jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to table three letters in support of Bill 201, with the prescribed number of copies of each. The first is from Assistant Principal Stan Travník in Leduc, the second is from the St. Paul education regional division 1, and the third is from Food Allergy Canada. We have indeed been consulting with stakeholders, and these letters show it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling an article called Why CBC News Is Doing a Series on Climate Change. That series is called In Our Backyard, and I have tabled other articles this week.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of e-mails to table from some angry constituents. One is from Chris Sadoway, who says that the member who was supplying the earplugs "should resign immediately." The second e-mail is from a constituent named Carrie Holstead, who said, "if I did anything like that in a meeting at my workplace, I would be fired." I have the appropriate number of copies of those to submit.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table correspondence regarding constituents from Lethbridge who were very concerned about what they termed the earplug stunt, thinking that it was quite repulsive and that the members involved should apologize.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a document which I received from a constituent who is "disgusted and appalled by the actions taken by the UCP and, regretfully, our premier" in regard to last night's debate, where, of course, he walked around and handed out earplugs.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. I'd like to also table some correspondence from a constituent about the earplug incident, about them frankly being "livid that the government decided to put in earplugs while the opposition was fighting for my spouses and families income." I have the requisite five copies.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. At approximately 2:13, 2:14 the hon. Member for Edmonton-West raised a couple of points of order.

Mr. Ellis: Calgary-West, but thank you.

The Speaker: Oh. Potayto, potato.

2:50

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission, could we combine the two points of order that I had there?

Point of Order Epithets

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this point of order. I certainly rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), but, I will say, more specifically, “language of a nature likely to create disorder.”

Last week, Mr. Speaker, in your ruling, which can be found on page 799 of *Alberta Hansard*, about the opposition referring to Bill 8 as Bill Hate, you stated:

I ask members, as we move forward, to choose their language carefully. Ask yourself whether your intention is to insult or to inflame debate or to levy an accusation against a member opposite or – and perhaps this is the [most] important part – to knowingly cause disorder.

I reference 23(j) of our standing orders.

If I may go back to the quote:

If so, I would suggest that you find another means to make your case.

You further remarked:

However, this ruling should not be considered *carte blanche* to proceed with using the mock bill title Bill Hate on a regular basis.

Now, I think it is quite clear that the intention of the members opposite is to insult or inflame debate on what is a very sensitive and important topic. I think that we are headed to a point where any use of the term “Bill Hate” in this Chamber will lead to points of order being called, which will disrupt question period and could very well lead to a point where order cannot be maintained. I would further add, Mr. Speaker, that if the opposition, of course, goes down this road, again I will continue to reference 23(j), of language that appears to be of an intent to likely cause disorder, it is only reasonable to conclude that it is meant to cause disorder.

I thank you for the time to speak on this. I certainly do not believe that this is a matter of debate or opinion. I think that this is a case where there is a clear intent by the opposition to cause disorder in this Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. deputy Opposition House Leader.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not a point of order. As you know and as we’ve discussed in this House many times, the government, when they were in opposition, nicknamed many, many, many of our government bills. We had the job-killing carbon tax, we had the no-more-pipeline law. Repeatedly the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo used “job-killing carbon tax.” The current Premier used “no more pipelines.” The hon. Minister of Transportation used “job-killing carbon tax.” This has happened numerous times in this House. When the government was in opposition, they were creative in many different ways on many different bills. We’ve discussed this already. I don’t believe that it’s a point of order.

The thing that I also find very interesting is that there is no consistency on the government side when they decide whether Bill Hate is actually inflaming something or not. It’s used frequently in this House, and even within this question period members referenced it more than once and there was no point of order. Then a certain member stood up, and all of a sudden it became a point of

order. So I would also like to maybe remind the government that sometimes they may be responding to certain members on our side of the House more frequently than they necessarily do other members in this House.

Again, I do not think that this is a point of order.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I am prepared to rule on the point of order. This particular point of order has been the subject of significant discussion in the House over the past couple of weeks. On numerous occasions the Speaker has provided caution with respect to the use of the term “Bill Hate.” On more than one occasion I provided guidance with respect to the ruling from 2013 of Speaker Zwozdesky. Even as late as yesterday I said:

I would conclude by saying that I am yet hesitant to rule Bill Hate out of order during question period. I would say again that I will be listening closely, that it would be hard to imagine another time or a scenario where Bill Hate used during question period would be unlikely to cause disorder. As such, I will be left with very little option but to deliver a similar ruling to that of Speaker Zwozdesky in 2013 when he ruled “climate change denier” as something that is likely to create disorder.

I don’t know that my direction could have been any stronger.

I take the deputy Official Opposition House Leader’s comments with a sense of reverence, around members utilizing names of bills other than the designated title. I can certainly see in the future that that practice will be permitted. However, with respect to Bill Hate I could also suggest that that particular title implies that other members may in fact hate individuals or the government hating individuals and has the ability to be particularly disruptive with respect to when the government may or may not call a point of order based on who may use it or may not use it. I’m not sure that that is particularly relevant with respect to this point of order today.

Having said that, I am prepared, as did Speaker Zwozdesky, for during Oral Question Period to rule the term “Bill Hate” out of order in the context that it is likely to create disorder and potentially lead to debate, as we have seen here today. Having said that, I am not prepared to rule that comment out of order during regular debate, as we have seen that it is significantly less likely to create disorder. Having said that, I wouldn’t provide a *carte blanche* ruling that would allow the opposition or other members of the Assembly to use the term “Bill Hate” during regular debate without consideration that it may in fact create disorder.

I consider this matter now concluded and would urge all members to refrain from using the term “Bill Hate” during Oral Question Period.

Point of order 3, raised by the hon. Opposition House Leader at approximately 14:27.

Ms Sweet: That was by the hon. Government House Leader, correct?

The Speaker: Sorry. Point of order 3 was raised during the question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. The Official Opposition House Leader raised the point of order, perhaps on your behalf, but I’m happy to hear from you if you are the one who is going to be arguing it today.

Point of Clarification

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m actually standing under 13(2): “The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member.” The reason I’m raising this as a point of order – and I believe that the Government House Leader at the time raised it as a point of order – is that if you reference my first question, which I anticipate you may have a copy of the Blues on already in front of you, it spoke specifically to raising a concern in

the House about the UCP using their government positions to raise money for their party. You interrupted me during that period of time to caution me around whether or not I was speaking to government policy. You then allowed the government side to not have to answer the question and recommended that they didn't actually have to answer the question, which I feel is a little bit out of turn given how my question was actually formed.

I'm just requesting clarity from you as to why you would, first off, indicate that my question was not in order and then why you would also allow the government to not have to answer my question given the way that it was framed.

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. What I did say in my remarks – and I do have the benefit of the Blues – is: “I might just remind hon. members that I didn't hear a particular topic of government policy there. I am more than happy to hear from the Government House Leader if he'd like to respond, but I wouldn't expect him to do so.”

At no point in time did I rule your question out of order. In fact, I didn't provide a ruling, only a cautionary tale. And, in fact, the Government House Leader did choose to answer your question, as is his responsibility.

What I would say in addition to that is that, now having the benefit of the Blues and having the opportunity to read the way that your question was framed, perhaps the intervention was unnecessary. But I do caution members, and I have spoken about this in the past. I'm happy to have members of the opposition or members of this House ask questions and ensure that they are tied to government business.

3:00

I also recognize that we are members of political organizations and that sometimes those two things can be very close. I want the opposition to be assured that I have no desire to prevent them from asking questions where those two things may join. But I want to encourage them to ensure that they do that in a manner that focuses on how that impacts the government or otherwise.

It is a cautionary tale, and I also will heed some of the advice or the reflection that the Member for Edmonton-Manning has provided today because upon reading the question, I would say that it's possible that the intervention was not warranted. If an apology is necessary, I'm happy to provide one both privately or publicly, but I encourage members that these questions need to be clearly tied to government policy so that the Speaker has clarity during the cut and thrust of debate around exactly what the member is asking.

As such, I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

I see the hon. deputy Official Opposition House Leader rising.

Ms Sweet: Standing Order 13(2), hon. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm happy to hear from you. Are you seeking . . .

Ms Sweet: Clarity here, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are you asking for Standing Order 13(2) on a 13(2), where I've literally just spent the last three minutes explaining why I said what I said?

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I am rising under 13(2) to get clarity around your ruling around this particular issue. Given that I am the critic for ethics in democracy, I just need a little bit more clarity as to how you see fit that I am able to ask questions of this government and these particular members within the role of ethics in democracy when it relates specifically to government policy but also members of that government.

The Speaker: I think you did a fine job on the second question, as I gave indication there. I also literally just provided three minutes of clarity on the ruling that I had previously made. I also said that I considered the matter dealt with and concluded. I don't think it's very reasonable for the hon. member to continue to challenge the chair when the chair has ruled. If the hon. member would like to continue the discussion outside of the Chamber, my door is always open, as she is very well aware. As such, I consider the matter concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: I would like to call the committee to order, members.

Bill 2

An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

The Chair: We are on amendment A1. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to join the discussion that has been happening on Bill 2 in Committee of the Whole. I do have a number of concerns about this bill, which we've colloquially called the pick-your-pockets bill, specifically because of the financial impact it is going to have on workers in Alberta, particularly workers who depend on the minimum standards that are included in employment standards. To be clear, it is primarily vulnerable workers who rely on employment standards' minimum standards.

There are many, many, many workers around Alberta who work in environments that have employers who give them far, far more than the minimum, and that's wonderful. But as a government there is a responsibility to make sure that there is a fair and balanced minimum standard for all workers. Bill 2 actually rolls back standards in a number of really important places.

We've had members rise in this House even today to accuse the opposition of misinformation or misrepresenting things. I would suggest to you, Madam Chair, that the government has been misrepresenting some of the changes inside of Bill 2 through social media channels and in talking to Albertans, and I would really like to spend a little bit of time talking about that.

First, let's talk about overtime. To be very clear, the opposition understands quite well the overtime change that is being proposed in Bill 2. At this point I question whether the government and the minister of labour, who is moving this piece of legislation, do understand. There have been a number of back-and-forth discussions, let's say, through different mediums, including social media, where the opposition has been pointing out that the overtime changes in Bill 2 will literally take money out of the bank accounts of 400,000 Albertans who work overtime, and in response the government has been talking about the parts of overtime that they're not changing. So let me be clear. We understand that the government is not changing paid overtime – we are not talking about paid overtime – but the changes to banked overtime will cost Alberta workers money.

Even during question period we've been able to talk a little bit about this. The Leader of the Official Opposition rose in this House and gave what I thought was a very clear example of how overtime will impact workers. For example, today at time and a half overtime

banking, if a worker does the two-week equivalent of banked overtime, they would then get three paid weeks off, which means that in their bank account they will have the pay from three weeks' worth of work. Under this bill the minimum standards would change and that worker, rather than getting three paid weeks off - time with family, which they deserve, having done overtime hours - they would actually only get two. Not only is that less time with family, but that is less money in their bank account because their bank account now only has the money from two weeks' worth rather than three.

I'm confused as to why the government, that is bringing forward this bill, continues to mislead Albertans and continues to post graphics that show there are no changes to paid overtime. I agree that this bill doesn't try to change paid overtime, but it does significantly change banked overtime. I think that not being able to have a legitimate, factual conversation with Albertans about this is a sign of a flawed policy and one that the government isn't proud of. I think that's really unfortunate.

Certainly, in my time as a minister working to improve the minimum standards that protect vulnerable workers, I saw it as my responsibility to always deal with factual truths, to always deal with the debate, and to come at it from a place of honesty. To have the minister talking about paid overtime, which isn't even changing and isn't in the bill, as if the opposition doesn't understand, is disingenuous. I know he is a very, very intelligent person; I know he is well intentioned, but he is providing incorrect information to the Alberta public and confusing their potential understanding for these changes.

I know this because when I talk about what is actually happening, I get a number of questions: the government said that there wasn't going to be a change. Well, there is. There's a big change, and it's a change where instead of getting time and a half for banked overtime, they'll only get straight time.

Ms Sweet: Point of order.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning called a point of order.

Point of Order Quorum

Ms Sweet: Madam Chair, I believe that under Standing Order 5(1) "the presence of at least 20 Members of the Legislative Assembly is necessary to constitute a meeting of the Legislative Assembly."

The Chair: Ring the bells.

[Pursuant to Standing Order 5 the division bell was rung at 3:10 p.m. and the Chair of Committees confirmed that a quorum was present]

Debate Continued

The Chair: Please proceed, hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to continue talking about the changes to banked overtime. As I was just explaining to you, Madam Chair - but we have a number of new people who have joined us for the discussion - paid overtime is not changing, but banked overtime, which has been time and a half, is moving backwards to straight time. That is going to have a very real impact on working Albertans.

Now, we have tabled in this House documentation that shows 400,000 . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Chair: A point of order. The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Referring to the Absence of Members

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise. The hon. member was referring to members that aren't in the Chamber. Again, not within the rules. The member knows that. Please instruct her to change her tone.

Ms Gray: I certainly don't want to disrespect anyone. I believe I referred to members who were in the Chamber, but I apologize, and I'm happy to withdraw.

The Chair: Sure. I didn't hear that there was a specific absence of any particular member in this Assembly . . .

Ms Gray: No. I didn't.

The Chair: . . . but perhaps a reference to new members in the chairs. I would express that you should take some caution, as you have already mentioned that you will.

Edmonton-Mill Woods, please proceed.

Debate Continued

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Now, the other interesting factor in the difference between paid overtime and banked overtime and the changes introduced in Bill 2 is the fact that the changes to move to straight overtime put Alberta in an entirely unique position within all of Canada. Everywhere in Canada, including Alberta today, workers who do overtime and choose to bank that overtime are given the banked overtime at a rate of time and a half. This is specifically because overtime work that a worker will provide to their employer is seen to be done at a premium because you have someone who has already done either eight hours of work in a given day or 44 hours in a week, as the case may be.

This is additional time and effort over and above those minimum standards that deserve to have the compensation of time and a half either paid, which, again I acknowledge is not changing in this bill, or when they bank it because the additional overtime that those workers are doing is time away from their family, is often work done when they are working very hard, have already done eight hours and continue to do more to achieve the goals that they need to accomplish in their place of employment.

Overtime pay, whether it's paid out or banked, deserves to be done at time and a half. That is the Canadian standard, and I have not heard a good argument for why Alberta workers should deserve less than the average Canadian worker across the country. In British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec: where a jurisdiction allows overtime banking, it is always at time and a half. Looking at that Canadian standard and looking across the board at what Alberta workers deserve and expect is an important job of any government. I think that we need to really consider why this bill is suggesting that Alberta workers deserve less. Again, I will make the point that I think it's incumbent upon the government to stop confusing the issue and talking about paid overtime, which we all know and fully understand is not changing in this bill, but banked overtime is.

So I would encourage the government members either in this Chamber or even in public communications on social media to

engage reasonably and factually about banked overtime changes. When I raise a concern about banked overtime, it's not reasonable to tell me that paid overtime is staying the same. We all understand that. The only thing that's happening is trying to confuse Alberta workers, and that's disappointing, when I see that behaviour happen.

Making sure that workers who deserve that overtime premium when they spend extra time get it is very important to my caucus and me. That is one of the strongest reasons why I am in opposition to Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, because it will have a very significant impact on workers who depend on overtime banking to balance out their lives. A lot of workers in Alberta work in scenarios where they travel to their place of work and potentially stay there for weeks at a time. Taking away banked overtime at time and a half is potentially costing them time with their families, literally costing them time with their families, because, again, when they do two weeks' worth of overtime banking, rather than being able to take three weeks with their family, they will only be able to have two. That's time and less money in their bank accounts. Of course, as you know, Madam Chair, time is money, so taking time away from people is taking away money, especially because this is paid time. So I'm very concerned about this overtime provision.

Now, there's a second provision that changes the minimum employment standard for Alberta workers. I keep referring to the minimum standard because this government has made the point – and it is a fair point – that employers are able to do more than the minimum. Many, many employers do, but there are employers who will and do only provide the minimums that are in employment standards. Often the workers who find themselves relying on minimum employment standards are the least empowered workers in our workforce. This might be young workers, this could be newcomers, this could be many different people in difficult situations who may not feel empowered to argue with an employer. I think it's really important to consider that.

I would be interested to know if members in this House have that personal experience of not getting a statutory holiday, because that's what this bill will do to some workers, not to all workers. But some workers, as a result of this, will find themselves not getting time with their family or not getting statutory holiday pay because the holiday has fallen on a weekend or has fallen on a day they don't typically work.

Now, a point I made earlier in second reading, Madam Chair, I think bears repeating. We know from looking at this in the past that a lot of employers, particularly big employers who hire a lot of people, have very sophisticated HR management systems. What they used those systems to do before our government brought in the change that all workers deserve stat holiday pay is that they would specifically set up scheduling to make sure that as few workers as possible got statutory holidays. That is a cost to those workers. That is a detriment to those workers.

I do not see the reasoning for why Alberta workers don't deserve the same rights and benefits as other workers across Canada, because, like the overtime banking change, the holiday pay change for statutory holidays would put Alberta as the only jurisdiction where someone could get nothing for Christmas. No time off, no stat holiday pay: why would Alberta want that to be its distinguishing feature? Why would Alberta want to be out of step on that policy? Is it because there are no businesses that run anywhere else in Canada? That is not the case. Businesses are able to grow and thrive across Canada while their governments still respect workers and implement minimum standards that benefit all Canadians, except potentially here in Alberta if Bill 2 is allowed to continue without amendments to these sections.

I would also like to submit to you, Madam Chair, that one of the reasons we made changes to holiday pay and to statutory holidays

in particular was to align with the rest of Canada to make sure that we have workplace minimum standards here in Alberta that match other jurisdictions. Again I remind you, Madam Chair, because our employment standards hadn't been updated in 30 years prior to the changes our government brought in, we were way out of line in so many ways, and a lot of workers were, I would say, falling through the cracks. It was hurting a lot of particularly vulnerable workers. This was not the white-collar workers in office towers that this was happening to primarily.

3:20

When I questioned the re-addition of very complicated new criteria, which were old criteria reimplemented that employers had asked us to simplify, this struck me very seriously as the addition of red tape from a government that is focused on reducing red tape. Employers needing to calculate: if in the last five of the nine weeks preceding the work week in which the general holiday occurs, this is how we handle it, et cetera, et cetera. These calculations and this system complication aren't necessary if we all just agree that every worker deserves statutory holiday pay, which seems to me to be a very reasonable premise and something that all Canadians appear to believe except for this government here in Alberta.

Being in a position of working a full-time job, going in day in and day out, and then, because Christmas and New Year's Day fall on a weekend, not being able to spend extra time with family, not being able to have that extra statutory holiday pay that, I would suggest, all Canadian workers deserve, including workers in Alberta, is disappointing and not something that I believe a majority of Alberta workers agree with from this government. Making sure that we have minimum standards that align with the rest of Canada, that are fair and treat our workers with respect would be my recommendation to this government.

Not doing that seems like this government just wants to pick the pockets of these workers. Again, who are these workers? The most vulnerable workers, generally speaking, those who rely on those minimum employment standards. Many, many of our employers in this province provide far greater than the minimum employment standards, and I thank all employers who may be doing that. Minimum employment standards are perfectly adequate, but here we're lowering them, and that's what I object to. I think our minimum employment standards in Alberta should match the minimum employment standards from across Canada and in other jurisdictions. It does not make sense to me that workers in every other province will get either time off at Christmas or stat holiday pay but not in Alberta.

Those are two of the major concerns that I have with the changes in Bill 2. After decades of inaction Albertans finally got to the point where they had the same rights and benefits as every other Canadians, finally had more family-friendly workplaces, job-protected leaves, improved maternity leave, compassionate care, and changes to overtime banking and changes to statutory holiday pay that would put us in line with other jurisdictions.

Now, we had talked about overtime and the people that this will impact. I think it's really important to really focus on or highlight the fact that a lot of the workers who use overtime banking, who use overtime in general, whether it's paid out or banked, work in the oil and gas sector, work in construction, and work in seasonal industries where they may not have a lot of flexibility. So these changes are going to impact a large number of Alberta workers, and I think that's very unfortunate.

Now, another change related to Bill 2, the pick-your-pockets bill, is starting a new policy or, rather, revisiting an old policy that was cancelled in the '90s of paying youth, students, less than the minimum wage, a new minimum of \$13 per hour. I have a lot of concerns with

this aspect of the package of changes that were announced with An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business because we know a number of things about youth and youth who work. They have different backgrounds, priorities, responsibilities. A lot of people opposed to increases in minimum wage will paint the picture that all youth who are working are living in their parents' basement and using the money to buy video games. We know that is not true. Of the youth who are working, there are youth who are supporting a family, either by helping to contribute to the family budget and support parents who may be in difficult situations or because they themselves are parents.

At the same time, I would hope that we would be encouraging all our youth in this province to stay in school because we know how beneficial that is not just to them but to our overall society and our economy, to have well-educated Albertans who are able to support themselves, who are able to not just survive but thrive. Getting a good high school education is an important first step, but this package of changes is actually going to encourage our most vulnerable students to drop out of school to get a \$2 per hour raise.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods not just for her comments but for all of the work that she did to support working Albertans in her time as minister of labour in the past government.

I know that one of the significant advances that she made in furthering the economic situation of working people was to grant them the ability to bank overtime hours at an overtime rate, just like our counterparts all across Canada. I, of course, want to speak to the amendment that is before us, which tries to at least re-enshrine this right to allow workers to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate. It's concerning to me that the members on the treasury benches continue to misrepresent what's actually going on here, because as my hon. friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods has stated time and again, time is money. If you're getting paid out overtime at the overtime rate, it only makes sense that you should be able to bank time at the overtime rate.

I want to share some personal stories about my own experience, family's experience, rather, working overtime. My dad is a welder. He continues to weld for a living, and that's how he supported his family when he was raising us, Madam Chair. My dad, of course, was smart enough to realize that you got better working conditions and wages and benefits if you worked union, so he continues to be a proud member of the plumbers and pipefitters local 488 here in Edmonton. Because of the higher wages and better benefits provided to unionized workers through local 488, he was able to provide for his family, a good life for his family, provide extended health care and dental benefits to us as children.

We are incredibly grateful for that because we know that there are many workers, particularly in Alberta, who don't have the benefit of a union and are really struggling to make ends meet because they don't have the high wages and the extended health benefits and pension plans that come from unionized work. I don't know, Madam Chair, if the contracts that he worked under guaranteed that they were able to bank at overtime rate for overtime hours. I would suspect that they do because, of course, construction labour unions are quite successful at negotiating good contracts with their employers. Certainly, it was the case when he worked on non-union jobs that that wasn't provided.

3:30

Now, Madam Chair, it was the case when we were children that my father had to work long hours far away from home. When we

were kids, we lived in southern Saskatchewan, and this was the early to late '80s. Of course, as you know, Saskatchewan at that time was being ravaged by the Grant Devine Conservative government, which was, without a doubt, the most incompetent and corrupt provincial government that any modern Canadian province has seen, and because of the incompetence and corruption of that government, the economy of Saskatchewan tanked. It had been managed effectively by NDP governments for decades, and it only took a few short years for Grant Devine and his gang of crooks to drive that economy into the ground. As a result, of course, my father had to seek employment outside of the province, and to do so, he often came to Alberta, which, you know, even though it was under a Conservative government, was at least managed competently and without the kind of corruption that Saskatchewan was seeing at the time.

So my father plied his welding trade in a number of locations. He worked at the pulp mill in Hinton. He worked at the pulp mill in Peace River. He worked on a number of pipeline projects all across the province. You know, he did his best, as many Albertans do, to provide a good living for himself and his family, but that work required him to spend long hours far away from home, like many Albertans do. I know that there are thousands and thousands of Albertans who are just like my father, who have to travel long distances and stay away from their families for extended periods of time.

You know, to think that my dad and thousands of workers like him don't even have the opportunity to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate is a shame. That means that, you know, he was sacrificing his time from his family, his children and only getting paid at the normal hourly rate for that. That's not how work should be structured, Madam Chair. We don't exist to simply work for our employers. We work for our own benefit as well, and an economy that works for everybody is one where people can work for a reasonable length of time and provide a good living for themselves and their family.

It's been a long-established practice to divide the work hours into eight-hour chunks – eight hours of work, eight hours of play or recreation or time with family, and eight hours of rest – and if you exceed that eight hours of work, Madam Chair, you should be paid or allowed to bank your overtime hours at the overtime rate because we recognize that that takes time out of the eight hours of rest and eight hours of time with your family and recreation that our society has agreed everybody should be entitled to.

Now, Madam Chair, working those long extended hours far away from home takes a toll on a family. There are thousands and thousands of Albertans who know the toll that it takes on a family to work those long hours away from home. In fact, when we were debating this bill in the filibuster last week, members of the UCP caucus identified that, you know, having to spend time here took time away from their other duties. As a result, we recognize that working beyond the normal hours takes time out of the things that we would also like to be doing with our time. So it's only fair that people be compensated at a premium rate for the time that is taken out of that eight hours of recreation and eight hours of rest that we deem to be appropriate. [interjections]

I have a feeling that the general noise in the Chamber is escalating to a point where nobody would really care what I'm saying. I could just talk about the weather.

Mr. Nielsen: I'm listening intently.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you. Yeah. Good. Good. Excellent. Thank you.

Back to my point, some of the projects that my dad worked on were pipeline projects. He continues to work on pipeline projects or would. He is currently unemployed because the line 3 project by Enbridge is held up in the Minnesota courts, but he will be back at work once that project resumes. Of course, like thousands of other Albertans, he is looking forward to going to work on, potentially, the TMX pipeline. It's remarkable to me, Madam Chair, that we are now creating a situation where we're very grateful that the pipeline projects are going forward, but if a person is working on the TMX pipeline or Enbridge line 3, working on those pipelines here in Alberta, they won't be guaranteed the ability to bank their overtime hours at overtime rates, yet the same person doing the same job on the same pipeline in British Columbia or Saskatchewan or Manitoba would be guaranteed the ability to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate.

Now, like I said, many of these workers are unionized, and I'm sure that thanks to the power of the union they're able to negotiate reasonable overtime payment agreements on behalf of their employees and their members. But not everybody, like I said, Madam Chair, works for a union or is covered by a union, and certainly there are measures in this bill that will make it harder for Albertans to unionize, so that's concerning to me. Not only are we taking away the guarantee that Albertans will be able to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate; we're also making it harder for them to organize collectively so that they have a union to bargain on their behalf to make sure that that guarantee is in place, which the government is failing to provide to them, which is grossly unfair, especially when we can look at any other province in the country and realize that that is the minimum standard that every employee is entitled to in every other province in the country.

It's also interesting that the ability of workers to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate doesn't seem to have any impact on employment rates. Certainly, if you look at B.C., right now they have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Saskatchewan, even though it's also had its challenges, has lower unemployment rates. In fact, almost every other province except for, of course, the Atlantic provinces, have lower unemployment rates than Alberta, yet they don't take away the ability for overtime hours to be banked at the overtime rates, Madam Chair. It just doesn't seem to make sense to me that taking away this significant economic benefit from people who are building this province will do anything to create jobs. There's no evidence that it will.

In fact, even in spite of this bill being before the Legislature right now and in spite of the government's successful repeal of the carbon tax and successful giveaway of 4 and a half billion dollars to the wealthiest corporations, we're still seeing layoffs occurring in this province, Madam Chair. We lost 21,000 full-time jobs in the month of May. Of course, the government caucus had been on the job for six weeks already at that point. We're, you know, more than two months into their mandate, and we see hundreds of people being laid off by Repsol just this week. Nexen, of course, is laying off hundreds of employees as well. At what point do we ask whether or not the legislation that has already been passed or that is under consideration by this House is having its intended effect of creating jobs and stimulating the economy?

3:40

It's interesting, Madam Chair. Every time we raise the fact that when workers have more money in their pockets, that stimulates the economy, of course, the members opposite disagree with us in the most vociferous terms possible, yet just in debate around Bill 9 the other night, you know, the Member for Calgary-Hays was telling us that we absolutely had to cut the deficit on the backs of public-sector employees because that will create jobs and those jobs will

put money in people's pockets that will stimulate the economy. The members opposite obviously agree that putting money in the pockets of working people will stimulate the economy. It's just that they don't want to do it through minimum-wage measures or allowing people to have overtime rates.

One of the other aspects that my hon. friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods raised was the fact that a lot of these employees who are affected by overtime rate changes are seasonal employees. They can't rely on regular work, Madam Chair, and it just makes sense that if they were able to bank their overtime hours at the overtime rate, they would be able to give themselves more of a cushion to look for that next job. Instead of having two weeks of overtime banked or three weeks of overtime banked, they could have three weeks or six weeks of overtime banked when they inevitably lose their jobs due to the seasonal nature of the work that they're engaged in. That would give them a little bit more time to find the next job.

I know from my own experience watching my father go to work that once one job was over, it was often a long time until the next one rolled around. That anxiety, that nervousness about not being able to make ends meet once the time ran out and the money in the bank was running short created a lot of stress for him and our family. I'm sure that that creates a lot of stress for thousands of Alberta families who find themselves in the same position. So why are we reimposing that stress and that anxiety on the workers of Alberta now? What did they do to deserve to be put into a more precarious position?

It's extra baffling to me because, you know, we've heard from the Member for Calgary-Bow a number of times. We've also heard from the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain about the desire of the members opposite to raise the status and esteem of the skilled trades. Absolutely that's a goal that we share, Madam Chair, but we have to recognize that a lot of people who are engaged in the skilled trades work are also working on a seasonal basis. They're going from project to project. They can't rely on having work every day of the working week every week of the year. There are often extended times when they're waiting for the next project to start up or the next contract to kick in, and they have to provide for themselves and their families with the savings and the time that they've banked from the last project. At least when we had the ability to bank overtime at the overtime rate, that provided, like I said, those workers with that cushion to look for the next job without being afraid of how they were going to provide for themselves and their families.

If we want more people to go into the skilled trades, which is the express goal that the members opposite have stated, then we should create the working conditions that would allow people to look into the trades and say: "You know what? I can see a future for myself and my potential family in the skilled trades because I know that I will be able to go from job to job, save up the time and the money to carry me through those days when I'm not working, and able to still live comfortably."

I can tell you from my own personal experience, Madam Chair, that when I was Minister of Advanced Education, I talked to a lot of students who were looking at what their future careers would be, and that was one of the things that they raised. It was often people like me, who were raised by parents who were working in the skilled trades, who saw their parents having to sit at home because they were waiting for the next project and the next contract to come along, and they saw the anxiety on their parents' faces because they weren't sure how they were going to make ends meet while they were waiting for the next job to come along. Lots of students told me, you know: "I don't want to live that way. I want to be able to

have the kind of job security that I and my family can rely on and not have to endure that anxiety, that stress of not knowing when the next paycheque was going to come in and how I'm going to provide for myself and my family and make ends meet."

I would encourage the members opposite to seriously consider the impacts that taking away banked overtime at the overtime rates will have on the considerations that students right now are making about what careers they want to go into once they leave school. Certainly, if they want to attract people . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to spend a bit of time talking again about Bill 2, a bill to pick your pockets and take money away from average Albertans, particularly those working in the trades and those working precarious labour. I know that we spent the night here in the House taking away rights from public service employees, so I'm not surprised that we're now attacking private employees in our work. Very discouraging for all of us here in the House who would like to see the conditions that both public and private employees work under be the best they possibly can be and not create undue stress for them.

I've had a chance to speak to a couple of these issues in the past and bring up concerns. I know I spoke last time a little bit about my concern about the nature of the banked overtime and the fact that in the trades that work is often precarious, as the previous speaker has mentioned, and that having banked overtime is a tool that is available to workers to be able to be responsible and take care of their future needs, like you do when you save money for a pension or you put money aside for a family vacation or put money aside for those emergencies like the washing machine breaking down or your car needing repairs. One of the tools that workers have been using is the ability to bank some overtime so that when the inevitable occurs and the work that they have dries up, especially in difficult economic times as we've experienced in the province of Alberta for the last few years, they're able to use this technique to kind of stretch out the comfort zone that they have for responding to the vagaries of life.

Having taken an opportunity to speak to that a little bit in the past, I'd like to move on and talk a little bit about another part of the legislation, that allows a lower rate for students who are under the age of 18 to be paid, who are in school, dropping the minimum wage from \$15 an hour to \$13 an hour. Again, I'm very concerned about how this causes a disruption in the predictability of work and really interferes with the ability of students to be thoughtful and thinking of the future. Just as the banked overtime was like putting some money aside for life that was approaching, the same thing for the minimum wage. It's often used by students to prepare themselves for the next step in life.

3:50

I know that I had many opportunities to work as a student. I think my first job, my first paid job outside of the home, was actually when I was eight years old, working delivering flyers in our community with my older brother. Subsequently, of course, I went on to spend some time delivering newspapers, as many people, I'm sure, have done here in this House. I happened to pick up jobs in junior high, both at the local drugstore and at the local Red Rooster store, which I'm not sure continues to exist anymore in the province of Alberta.

Ms Hoffman: I think there's one in Sherwood Park.

Mr. Feehan: There's one in Sherwood Park still. Okay. We don't see them too often. But all of those jobs, I admit, when I was a young man did not require me to put a roof over my head or food in my mouth, so I used them in order to prepare in advance for the future. I used them to make decisions about places that I could go and do things that were important to me. Having put that money aside, it also allowed me to make choices around the type of work I did. I think that's really important because one of the things that I did in high school was make a decision that I was going to be working in the field of human services for my summer jobs, part-time jobs. I understood that that meant I would be paid less than many of my peers who were working in other more lucrative areas of employment and were able to get more than \$15 an hour.

In fact, I just want to point out to the House that in the 1970s, when my two older brothers were lifeguards for the city of Edmonton, they were earning more than \$15 an hour at that time. On the other hand, I was earning initially around \$2.50 an hour for the work that I was engaged in, but it meant that I also, because I was able to take that money and save that money, was able to make some choices.

One of the choices that I made was, in the summer after grade 11 – after grade 10 first, I guess, 10, 11, and then after first-year university; that's right – I made the choice to work at Camp He Ho Ha, Camp Health, Hope & Happiness, a camp designated for people with disabilities to come and enjoy the summer, but in a place where the particular needs that they had with regard to the accessibility of their wheelchair or canes or crutches or attendants to medical issues such as diabetes or cerebral palsy or other kinds of issues that may have come up for them allowed them to enjoy the same things that so many of us enjoy in the summer: getting out into the fresh air, getting out onto the water, learning some crafts, learning some activities such as riflery, which I taught, and archery, which I taught, and those kinds of activities. But the reality was that when you worked at Camp He Ho Ha, you knew that you were actually not going to be earning a lot of money.

At the time I was able to survive because I happened to have parents that were more than prepared to make sure that I had a roof over my head and food in my mouth. The money that I earned at places like the drugstore and at the Red Rooster I was able to put aside, and then when I worked over the summer at Camp He Ho Ha, I was able to say, "Okay; I'm not earning as much as I could be earning by going somewhere else," as some of my peers did, to some of the major corporations to get summer jobs. As a result, I could make a choice that was beneficial not only for myself, because it was an incredibly fantastic experience and really helped me to grow up and to learn some good things about the universe, but it also meant I was able to contribute and work in a place where people who are most vulnerable were able to enjoy all those things that make Alberta a wonderful place to live.

The thing that concerns me now is that if you reduce the wages for people who are under the age of 18, as I was for all of these times that I have mentioned, then you will be putting them in a place where they cannot make those kinds of choices. Because they're earning less money, they cannot put money aside. Therefore, when it comes time to find a new job, the only choice they have available to them is to try to find work that will pay them the maximum amount. Because they haven't been able to put anything away, they can't go to a place like Camp He Ho Ha and say, "Look, I'm prepared to work for less; I'm prepared to go with the summer camp hours," the 24 hours a day that you got paid for.

Back then, I just want to note, I actually only got paid \$400 for the whole summer, for two months, at Camp He Ho Ha the very first time. It was only because of my work throughout the year that I was able to make that kind of choice. This is what we're taking

away from students when we do that. Somehow we always assume that student money is not important, yet it was very important to me. It allowed me to make a contribution to society. I was able to put some money away.

Now, I think it's really important that we talk a little bit about what some of the benefits and values are in having a significant minimum wage. We know that minimum wages as they rise do in fact put more dollars in the hands of lower income people. The evidence is very clear that people who are in the lower income brackets, the lowest quintile or the lowest two quintiles, often do indeed have more expendable cash when the minimum wage rises. That's a good thing in and of itself. We have a benefit, then, of people who can take some mastery over their own lives and can make decisions because they have now some money to spend. Unfortunately, that often doesn't give them much choice. It just might mean a better quality of instant noodles than they happened to pick the last week. But it is a very important difference for many people.

We know that as the minimum wage rises, it actually also increases some positive effects in the work site, a good thing for employers. For example, the evidence indicates that job satisfaction increases with the increase of the minimum wage, and one of the things that comes along with job satisfaction is that there is reduced employee turnover. Your minimum wage is enough to allow you to make choices. There's nothing more frustrating than going to a job, feeling like you're contributing, feeling like you're working, feeling like you're putting in your time, and then getting your paycheque and realizing that it just doesn't feel like it was worth while because it doesn't allow you to pay the bills that you need to pay or to make the choices like I did, for example, to work at a summer camp or other choices that you might make as a student, particularly those students who don't live in the fortunate circumstance that I was raised in, where my parents were paying, you know, room and board for me and, of course, providing many other wonderful things for me.

Many of my peers didn't have that option. They couldn't go home to their families and expect their families to be able to contribute to their well-being. So every dime they earned was important in terms of whether or not they had new clothes at the beginning of the school year, whether or not they were able to go out and join in any activities with their peers when they said: hey, let's go see a movie. If they spent money on a movie, they didn't have money to contribute to the family, who might need that money for groceries or something else of that nature.

We know that the minimum wage has some really positive effects both for the person who receives the dollars and for the companies that provide a higher minimum wage: keeping employees, keeping their job satisfaction up.

There's another really important implication to the minimum wage that we cannot forget, and that is that minimum wage money tends to be spent almost a hundred per cent in the local economy. People who are on minimum wage, whether they're students or not, are spending their money often within blocks of their home. It is very unlikely that they would be spending money in another province or another land. As a result, we know that money comes back into our economy and recirculates, increasing the GDP in the local economy, which I think is a positive thing.

Now, one of the things that the government side of the House is often heard to say: talking about giving some support to the job creators. I think that's a very interesting phrase. It's one that we have to dissect a little bit here. When they refer to it, they refer to job creators as people who own businesses and who hire other people. I accept that. I think that that's a fine way to recognize the efforts of people who own businesses. One of the many

contributions that they make is that they create opportunities for others, and I appreciate that. I think we need to find ways to support that.

4:00

But the reality is that to call employers job creators, while it's true, is only a part of the truth of a very complex interweaving of dynamics in an economy, and that is that employers, in fact, don't really create jobs; consumers do. The reason why I say that is because no employer creates a job that doesn't have somebody wanting or needing to buy the product that they're producing. Without the consumer, no job gets created. Now, I guess that could also be said to be true about the employer. If there were no employers, there would be no jobs other than the ones that people create for themselves, which, of course, many people do.

I think it's important to remember that it's a very important, complex question here about how jobs get created, and to simply take one side of the equation and say, "We need to do everything for people who own a business for them to create jobs" without also saying, "We need to increase the money available to consumers so that they can create the jobs that the employers will be fulfilling in order to satisfy the needs of the consumers," then we're missing half the equation here.

I think this is particularly important because we are contrasting what this government has chosen to do. They have chosen to give very significant dollar value to the richest corporations in the world to reduce their taxes when we know that a significant part, often more than 70 per cent, of the dollars given to a major corporation is not spent in the local economy. It goes away. If you have a headquarters in another province, if you have headquarters in another country, those dollars are gone. We get little to no benefit from that here in the province of Alberta. Those same numbers of dollars given to the most vulnerable people at the lowest wage, the minimum wage, tend to be spent close to a hundred per cent.

You're talking a very significant increase in local spending when you provide that money to the people at the lower end of the income level, and that's a choice that the government has made. They have chosen not to increase jobs by increasing the amount of consumer spending that is possible here in this province. Instead, they're doing a very good job creating service jobs in foreign lands where rich corporation executives go to spend their holidays and go to employ people who will work in their business but work for less money. Very often the decision is made by corporations to leave Alberta because they can find a cheap labour force in a country where poverty is rampant. It's quite problematic that we're allowing all that money to be taken out of the province of Alberta and spent on creating employment for people at terrible wages.

I think it's important that we reconsider and take this amendment quite seriously and reconsider what it is we're doing here. It is inconsistent with the desire to create jobs here in the province of Alberta and to increase our local spending, the local GDP, therefore increasing demand, thereby creating employment. I know it's a big difference between us and the government side because they believe in supply-side economics and we believe in demand-side economics.

We have stood up in this House repeatedly bringing in reports from across North America and the world demonstrating that supply-side economics does not work. We tried to bring in evidence from universities. We tried to bring in evidence from associations which we felt they would like and support, like, for example, the evidence I brought in from the Congressional Budget Office in the United States. We don't want them to dismiss the information because they don't like the source.

We sought out information from highly respected economic units around North America that cannot be considered left wing by any stretch of the imagination. That evidence indicated that supply-side

economics does not have the support of people who do research, of the business associations that actually sit down and calculate numbers and make decisions.

This is why we are perplexed on this side of the House. We know so far that evidence, even the best evidence available in the world, is not going to change the government's opinion. We know that the lived experience of people here in the province of Alberta who are low income and who depend on those dollars – we share their stories – is not going to change the government's decision here.

It befuddles us that these kinds of bases for making decisions are not being used by this government, so it leaves us with one simple fact, and that is that the government is deriving a benefit from these decisions that has nothing to do with either evidence or the lived experience of vulnerable people, and that is that somehow there is some benefit to the government, that the government will be receiving something in the form of political contributions.

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

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to offer some reflections during committee in regard to Bill 2. You know, I've been thinking about this bill both in a general sort of way in regard to sending a message or a certain tone towards Alberta's working population and then about some specific changes that are being made and some of the implications that could come from those changes as well.

In regard to the general, I guess, tone or message that Bill 2 sends to Alberta's working population, it has a general message that we are taking things back from what workers have earned and what workers have achieved both in terms of wages here in the province of Alberta and in terms of working conditions as well. You know, we've had a lot of discussion around the banked overtime position, and I certainly will get back to that in my comments because I have been speaking to others around this and reflecting on the rollback for banked overtime and what the government is proposing here in Bill 2.

But I just want to touch, perhaps, on a couple of other issues that were less discussed here in the House, particularly, I think, some things that we need to think about a little more carefully. This whole idea around holiday pay and curtailing an individual's accessing of holiday pay is, I think, a serious issue that, you know, doesn't cost a great deal, necessarily, for employers but sends a message around working conditions and sends a message around looking after workers and their families.

You know, the simple issue, I guess, if we could focus on a single holiday, is around Christmas, right? It's generally a holiday that is recognized in labour law across this country and indeed in many countries around the world. For us to be somehow leaving holiday pay for Christmas Day to the discretion of an employer is a shift that involves money, but it's also a shift that involves power. What it is: it's taking the right of an individual to access holiday pay for Christmas, for example, and leaving it to the discretion of employers. I think that not only is this taking money from the pockets of workers, usually low-income workers, but it also, I would suggest, is just sending a very negative message.

4:10

You know, when you look at a bill like Bill 2, it sets certain parameters around taking away some holiday pay rights for workers and the minimum wage for young people as well, banked overtime for workers in that situation, but it also sends a message of direction, that the government is going to squeeze the noose on these things,

that we're looking for more, that we're looking for more places by which we can do so.

When we're trying to get Albertans back to work, when we're trying to build a framework by which, as the government's slogan suggests, we're open for business and so forth, well, you know, none of these things say that at all. They say a message that is quite the opposite, that we will curtail the working conditions and the pay of workers here in the province of Alberta. And you know what? Watch out, because who knows what's coming next?

When we look at holiday pay, for example, and leaving that to the discretion of an employer, then there are lots of other holidays and lots of other, I guess, leave provisions that are in the labour code that people are worried about: compassionate leave for an individual whose loved ones might be ill, maternity leave for those that are starting families and having young children, all sorts of others.

Ms Hoffman: Domestic violence.

Mr. Eggen: Domestic violence. Exactly. That's another one that is finally being recognized as something that should be protected for an individual to be working and dealing with issues around domestic violence.

I would suggest, Madam Chair, that it's not just the words that are printed on this particular bill, but it helps to define a direction that I think workers and working families in the province of Alberta would find troubling and disturbing as well. It's a question of respect, to respect workers and their place in our society and the essential way by which they actually help to make our society function. It is measured by wages, of course, because we need to feed our families and house them and clothe them, but also by having that confidence that those measures of protection through law are respected for the future so that you don't have to be looking over your shoulder for further cuts to wages or working conditions and so that you can have that sense of security to build your family, to get that mortgage, to have those kids, and to move forward with confidence on all matters that could support those things.

So here we are with Bill 2, which makes, I think, quite draconian cuts to overtime, banked overtime and so forth, and to the minimum wage for young people. I think the message has been brought forward loud and clear that any worker engaged in any employment should be paid equally for their labour and their time regardless of what their age is, right?

I mean, I was shocked to think about a simple fact for the grade 12 graduating class, which we were celebrating. There are commencements tonight at Queen Elizabeth high school, I believe, and probably in dozens of schools around the province in the next few days; many commencements already have taken place. That graduating class, which we are so proud of, if they had the misfortune of perhaps being born in one month or another, would be eligible for a 13 per cent differential in their wages as they move forward, whether they are not 17 until later in the year or if they are already 18 and so forth.

You know, that's a very simple analogy that I think all members in this Legislature should think about and realize that they're sending forward a message of discrimination, of arbitrary discrimination based on age. That sends a message to a young person's pocketbook, but as I say, it sends a message of disrespect as well.

You know, I learned from being a teacher for 20 years that when you are managing a class and encouraging them to learn, the first precondition to success in learning is the confidence that a student knows and internalizes that they will be treated fairly. So when this legislative body – if we could use that analogy of the Alberta

classroom writ large of the hundreds of thousands of young people that are in the situation of having their pay changed and cut by this government, then we are in the same way undermining the confidence of those young people to know that we have and will produce laws and regulations that will protect them. It undermines that confidence because here we are debating a law that removes protections, equality, justice, and fairness for young people.

That same analogy or that same principle can be applied directly to this notion of banked overtime, being able to bank and count on that overtime as it should be and being paid as the overtime that the person worked for in the first place. We know that Alberta has a very large project-based workforce, a very large seasonal workforce. You go hard when you are working, let's say, in a project in Fort McMurray, and then you are away and back to your family. Let's say that you might have been working in a camp, working very hard, very long hours and building a budget that was predicated on the total payment, including overtime, including banked overtime, so that you can space that out over the year and have a reliable budget that you can count on for yourself and your family to pay the bills that you need to pay. Again, taking money out of the pockets of individuals, picking that money, literally, of banked overtime that someone earned fairly by working hard in overtime but also, again, undermining the confidence and the security of knowing – is this legislative body building laws and regulations that will protect the rights of a worker and their family, or is it constraining those laws and regulations so that, again, you have to work hard and also look over your shoulder to see what the Legislative Assembly is going to take from you in these coming months and weeks and years?

As I say, it's not fair, and it's bad governance, quite frankly, Madam Chair. You know, when you do execute those things over a period of time, you lose the confidence of the people that put people into this Legislative Assembly in the first place. I mean, during the honeymoon period of a new government and all that kind of thing people are feeling good and talking about their mandate, feeling great about that. Well, that's fine and well. But you know what? You're judged only on the next thing that you do in this Legislature. You can rest on all your laurels a little bit, but really you're only as good as the next thing that you do.

I would suggest that the next thing that we should do in order to send a positive message to try to mitigate some of the damage, I think, that has happened in this legislative body over the last couple of weeks – right? – in regard to a number of, I think, punitive bills that have been brought forward here in this Assembly: take a long, hard second look at Bill 2 and try to temper it and say that, you know, there is a spirit of compromise that can reside in this Chamber, a spirit of compromise and collaboration that moves past the earplug stunts and the yelling and the ranting and the raving and going on about giant mandates and how you can just do anything you want with those things, undemocratic discussions, I would suggest, suggesting that democratic debate here is somehow not welcome in such a place as this. We can mitigate that. We can start to walk back from that precipice – right? – and look for a reasonable way by which we can, I guess, pull back on this Bill 2.

The first place I would suggest, Madam Chair, quite frankly, is simple. It's elegant, and it definitely will push back against this idea that we are making punitive laws against young people here in this Chamber. That would be to just abandon this minimum wage differential between young people and adult workers here in the province of Alberta.

4:20

Many employers are already speaking out very loudly and clearly that they don't think it's fair and that they will not abide by it. You

know, the hon. President of Treasury Board said: "Well, yeah, that's the way it should work. Then you have people making decisions." But there's a difference between a choice an employer can make and making sure that it's backstopped by regulation and law, knowing that there is a fair minimum that they must abide by, right? We can't just depend on the good graces and the magnanimous world view of employers to make sure that they pay a minimum wage. By definition a minimum wage is the legal line that we draw in the metaphorical sand of wages. You don't just say: okay; we'll have a minimum wage, and we'll have different minimum wages for different people in different circumstances. I know that this government has talked about a different minimum wage for people that serve alcohol – right? – or that work in nightclubs. The list goes on and on.

Once you start down that path of compromising the integrity of a minimum wage, then all bets are off, you know. Don't think that people that work in the entertainment industry aren't watching over their shoulder very, very carefully to see what further punitive constraints will be put on their income for themselves and their families based on the fact that this government has the audacity to differentiate between someone who happened to be born in June and somebody who was born in July, who is 17 or 18 years old, and have a 13.3 per cent differential in their wages just based on that happenstance of when they happen to be born.

Yeah. That would be my modest proposal, very reasonable, that you back off something like that. I mean, it would fit into this whole notion that this government ran on in terms of reducing red tape, you know. I think that it's a great idea to always make sure that regulations are coherent and sensible and logical and have some elegance in their simplicity to execute those regulations. Just imagine trying to chase down kids that are working part-time and then according to this – I think this bill said: well, maybe if they're not in school, then they can get the \$15 or if there are extenuating circumstances or something like that, right? I mean, that's pure unadulterated, Byzantine, reductive, not logical regulation for the sake of red tape.

I'll do the job for the new associate minister to reduce red tape and get rid of this minimum wage differential. There you go. You can steal the best ideas – I often do that as well – but credit it as well. Make sure that you mention: the Member for Edmonton-North West gave me this idea, and I thank him for it. You know, get rid of all this red tape. I don't know if you can have, like, truant officers wandering the streets of Calgary looking for students: "Are you going to school and working at Tim Hortons? Well, I'm afraid I'm going to cut your wages then." I mean, the whole thing has a level of absurdity that would be funny if it wasn't real, based on the laws and the proposals that are here in this bill.

When you present legislation, always try to make sure that it fits the matrix of being logical – right? – that it gives people the head nod, that regular working people say, "Yeah; that sounds good to me, sounds reasonable," and make sure that it's enforceable and that it's straightforward and simple. Bill 2 does not meet any of those criteria at all. Walk Bill 2 out right now down by the fountain there – it's not raining at the moment – and ask a few people about the differential in the minimum wage for young people, ask about the banked overtime and clawing that back. You know, I think that two years from now, if I'm doing my math correctly, Christmas is going to fall on a Saturday.

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but according to Standing Order 4(3) we will now rise and report progress on Bill 2.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Guthrie: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

Mrs. Savage: I would ask that the House be adjourned.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:26 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 1st Session (2019)

Activity to Thursday, June 20, 2019

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

Bill 1 — An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax (\$) (Kenney)

First Reading — 8 (*May 22, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 44 (*May 23, 2019 aft.*), 79-92 (*May 27, 2019 eve.*), 95-107 (*May 28, 2019 morn.*), 121-43 (*May 28, 2019 aft.*), 166-70 (*May 28, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 215-24 (*May 29, 2019 aft.*), 239-41 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), (*May 30, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 246-51 (*May 30, 2019 morn.*), 327-339 (*Jun. 3, 2019 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 4, 2019 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2019 c1]

Bill 2 — An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business (Copping)

First Reading — 58 (*May 27, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 145-52 (*May 28, 2019 eve.*), 189-90 (*May 29, 2019 morn.*), 236-39 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 375-79 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 416-17 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve.*), 448 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 986-1002 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft.*), 1090-99 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

Bill 3 — Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act (Toews)

First Reading — 111 (*May 28, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 236 (*May 29, 2019 eve.*), 341-53 (*Jun. 4, 2019 morn.*), 408-16 (*Jun. 4, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*Jun. 5, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 685-700 (*Jun. 11, 2019 aft.*), 738-45 (*Jun. 12, 2019 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Bill 4 — Red Tape Reduction Act (Hunter)

First Reading — 202 (*May 29, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-78 (*May 30, 2019 aft.*), 365-75 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft.*), 432-48 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 633-44 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 644-46 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve., passed*)

Bill 5 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 779 (*Jun. 12, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 986 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Bill 6 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 931 (*Jun. 18, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 984-86 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Bill 7 — Municipal Government (Property Tax Incentives) Amendment Act, 2019 (Madu)

First Reading — 356-57 (*Jun. 4, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 625-31 (*Jun. 10, 2019 aft.*), 653-60 (*Jun. 11, 2019 morn.*), 701-07 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 811-13 (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Bill 8 — Education Amendment Act, 2019 (LaGrange)

First Reading — 421 (*Jun. 5, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 648-49 (*Jun. 10, 2019 eve.*), 707-25 (*Jun. 11, 2019 eve.*), 781-95 (*Jun. 12, 2019 eve.*), 848-74 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 9 — Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act (Toews)

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019, passed on division*)

Second Reading — 874-84 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve.*), 933-71 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve.*), 1004-76 (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 19, 2019 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 10 — Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019 (Toews)

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 847-48 (*Jun. 17, 2019 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 971 (*Jun. 18, 2019 eve., passed*)

Bill 11 — Fair Registration Practices Act (Copping)

First Reading — 975 (*Jun. 19, 2019 aft., passed*)

Bill 12 — Royalty Guarantee Act (Savage)

First Reading — 1088 (*Jun. 20, 2019 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act (Armstrong-Homeniuk)

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 825-38 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., passed*)

Bill 202 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Protecting Alberta's Children) Amendment Act, 2019 (Ellis)

First Reading — 277 (*May 30, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Second Reading — 838-40 (*Jun. 17, 2019 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 203 — An Act to Protect Public Health Care (Feehan)

First Reading — (*Jun. 13, 2019 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)

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