



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 4, 2019

Day 52

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have two school groups visiting us this afternoon. From Drayton Valley-Devon please welcome students from H.W. Pickup school, and from Edmonton-Decore welcome students from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic elementary. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, this afternoon I have somewhat of a bittersweet introduction to make. In the Speaker's gallery are two long-time LAO employees who are both due to retire in January 2020. Committee Clerk Karen Sawchuk has been with the LAO since 2001 and has clerked 20 different committees. We are so grateful to Karen for her service and dedication to our members and our province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Bills and *Journals* Clerk Judy Bressmer started with the LAO in 2000, and for 20 years she has served in room 315, and for some 40 years she has been a public servant. I like to call her the original J.B., and during my time as both a staff member and member of caucus I have come to be able to know the absolute joy that it is to be able to work with Judy. Certainly, if we have interactions with House business, we will miss you next session. The place just isn't going to be the same without you. Thank you so much for your service not only to members and to Albertans but to the principles of democracy and freedom. Judy Bressmer, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Also in the galleries are some hard-working constituency assistants from Airdrie-Cochrane – Mikayla Houghton and Carole Vallet – as well as, from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Sharon Lencewich. Thank you so much for all you do in making our constituency offices run so well.

In the gallery this afternoon as guests of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: representatives of the Muslim Association of Canada.

Today I'm also very, very pleased to welcome some very, very, very close family friends, some might say best friends, but that I'll leave to somebody else to determine. Please welcome Kealy Dube and Ethan Dube Estrada, friends of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, you can continue. It's okay. We have a number of introductions, and some of them are yours. Go ahead as well if you'd like to take your seats.

Also, a guest of the Minister of Children's Services: a constituent of Calgary-Shaw, Darren Moroz.

Also, here for today's international Human Rights Day are Earl Choldin, Bernadette Iahtail, and Prabhjot Punnia, guests of Edmonton-Ellerslie; from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood Maria Dunn and Leif Gregerson as well as April Eve Wiber; from Edmonton-Rutherford Joseph Luri and Michelle Nieviadomy; and from Edmonton-Meadows Miriam Thomas and Thomas and Marla Palakkamanil.

Almost last today is a very, very special guest as well of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, Benjamin Hauck and his family. They are visiting from the constituency. Benjamin is quite the artist. He actually won the art contest in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora in order to be featured on the member's Christmas cards.

Members, if we could welcome those guests to the Assembly, I would greatly appreciate that.

Hon. members, we also have a virtual introduction of sorts. I understand that today the Member for Calgary-Klein's son is currently live streaming the Assembly with his grade 6 class at St. Marguerite school. Hello, Patrick. Daddy loves you.

Statement by the Speaker

Alberta MLA Awards

The Speaker: Hon. members, all hon. members will know that this week I put out a call for the first-ever annual Alberta MLA awards. I'm most pleased during these introductions to introduce to you, through me, all of those who have been voted as winners of the categories by you, the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Please rise as I call your name, and I'd kindly ask everyone to hold their applause until we have read out all of the winners: the most collegial MLA, the Member for West Yellowhead; the best debater, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland; best community outreach, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood; Alberta's most knowledgeable parliamentarian, the hon. Member for Airdrie-East; Alberta's best representative of constituents, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler; Alberta's hardest working MLA, the Member for Grande Prairie; the most promising newcomer, the MLA for Calgary-North East. The MLA lifetime achievement award goes to the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West. Lastly, congratulations to Alberta's MLA of the year as voted by your colleagues, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Hon. members, your MLAs of 2019.

Members' Statements

30th Legislature, First Session, Accomplishments

Mr. Loewen:

'Twas just weeks before Christmas, and the province throughout,
People were positive, with no reason to doubt.

The UCP government implemented their plan,
Passing bills promised in the platform they ran.

374 commitments were on the platform,
148 under way, and we're just getting warm.

The NDP and their media have voiced their despair,
Claiming we're working so hard, it just isn't fair.

First bill up was to remove the failed carbon tax,
Which will help the economy improve right to the max.

Next on the list was a job-creation tax cut
To get our economy out of the rut.

Open for business act had a strong business case,
Things like restoring democracy in the workplace.

Bill 6, to the joy of our ag sector, we did nix
And replaced it with a well-consulted Bill 26.

In education we did maintain the spend.
In health care we added \$200 million in the end.

Quadruple apprenticeship spots, job skills careers,
Creating opportunities that were in arrears.

With red tape we have worked on reduction
In order to increase corporate and municipality
production.

Now indigenous opportunities, now fairness to
newcomers,
Now elected Senators, too;

On ministers, on backbenchers,
And our fantastic staff, too;

To the top of the Canadian economy,
To the top of public services.

Now the Legislature session has dashed away fall,
So let's dash away, dash away, dash away, all.

But not before we talk about a few
More of the promises made to you.

150 million more dollars to fight the addictions wave,
To help with mental health, with lives to save.

When we found appointed Senators did not represent,
We knew the process for Senate; elections were
meant.

We promised a war room, so we could fight back
Against foreign-funded radicals, who are on the
attack.

These things I have listed, named just a few,
We've accomplished with strong work from the UCP
crew.

The ministers, it seems, have never slept
As each day we announce: promise made, promise
kept.

Now as we go into the Christmas season,
We must remember Christ is the reason.

Giving hope and light to Albertans at this time,
Merry Christmas to all who have enjoyed this fine
rhyme.

1:40

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

Human Rights

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 10 we mark Human Rights Day and the 71st anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights, a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being. A Canadian, John Peters Humphrey, as the first director of the United Nations' division of human rights, prepared the preliminary draft of the universal declaration of human rights for the executive group that was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. Mr. Humphrey spent the rest of his life working for human rights in Canada and around the world.

Today I invite all members of this Assembly to join with me in celebrating the progress made in advancing human rights. While we have made much progress, there is still much more work to do. We must stand up every day for human rights, starting with our own actions. We must respect our differences and stand together against those who promote hate and those who seek to divide us.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know, I was born in Chile at the dawn of the dictatorship, a regime that saw the torture and killing of thousands of opponents and the thwarting of human rights complaints against its security forces. Unfortunately, Chile is once again going through the same thing. Although my parents brought

me to Canada when I was very young, it is this background that helped to form my early understanding of the need for all of us to speak about human rights.

I call upon all members of this House to recognize our global reputation as defenders of human rights and commit ourselves to standing up for human rights every day, in Canada and around the world.

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

Human Rights

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in recognition of Human Rights Day, which is celebrated annually across the world on December 10. This celebration holds great significance because it was on this date in 1948 that the United Nations' General Assembly adopted the universal declaration of human rights. This declaration highlights the absolute rights that every person is entitled to as a human being, without discrimination. This year the theme for Human Rights Day is Youth Standing Up for Human Rights. Young people should be empowered as they play an important part in this positive change.

I also rise in appreciation of fundamental human rights that we as Albertans and Canadians enjoy and cherish here every day in this country. We are a country that respects the importance of freedom of assembly to allow people to voice their discontent. For many people here, the concept of having our fundamental rights disrespected is incomprehensible. We in Canada cherish freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of religion. However, in many parts of the world, like Kashmir, Hong Kong, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and Venezuela, human rights have been reportedly violated. There are people fighting every day for their most basic rights to be respected.

The simple fact is that when humanity's values are disregarded, we are all at risk. We have seen this play out many times throughout history. We must work together to ensure that these rights are protected for all. Our shared humanity is rooted in these universal human values. We celebrate the world's success in moving forward on human rights for all, but we must remember those who are still fighting or even died standing up for their rights.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Violence against Women

Member Irwin: December 6, 1989: 30 years ago the lives of 14 women were taken at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal. They were murdered by a man who hated women, a man determined to kill feminists. Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, et Annie Turcotte: we remember them.

We remember the countless women who have lost their lives to violence before and since then. We know that women continue to face high rates of violence. Every six days in Canada a woman is killed by a current or former intimate partner. Alberta has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the country, and the severity of the violence is on the rise. We know that the rates of violence against trans and nonbinary individuals and two-spirit people remain dangerously high. Indigenous women are assaulted almost three times more often than nonindigenous women in Canada.

Today we remember those killed at l'école Polytechnique and all those who are victims of violence. Today we must also reflect on

the changes we need in order to make sure this violence doesn't continue. We stand together in remembering lives lost and fighting for a better future for women and gender-diverse folks.

We must stand with more than just words. This means investing in our communities. This means education: consent education, violence prevention, and more. This means demanding more from our legislators, from all of us, from those who might minimize violence against women. Let's not just say that we'll be better; let's do better.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

Big Hill Haven Women's Shelter in Cochrane

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On any given night in Canada 3,500 women and their children sleep in shelters because it's not safe at home. Often women in turbulent relationships are so fearful of reprisal from their abuser that it may take months or years before they can build up enough courage to leave. When an abusive partner discovers that their victim is seeking support or threatening to leave, the abuse can and most often does increase. Half of all young women who were victims of domestic violence homicide in Canada were murdered by somebody with a prior conviction, that was most often for a violent offence. I'm proud to be part of a government that recently passed Bill 17, which emulates Clare's law, to help prevent domestic violence in Alberta.

Addressing domestic violence is not an individual pursuit. In my constituency the women at Big Hill Haven Women's Shelter have been working tirelessly to provide housing, counselling, and crisis support for women in our area. Big Hill Haven was founded in 2016 to address the lack of safe shelters and resources for women fleeing or living with domestic abuse. Those serving at Big Hill Haven have directly assisted more than 150 women escaping abusive relationships. They receive six calls per day from people looking for help, guidance, or support. Mr. Speaker, I truly admire the work being done at Big Hill Haven. It is an essential resource in my community for women and children suffering in isolation.

Right now Big Hill Haven is partnering with various organizations to open up opportunities for community-based housing in advance of building a permanent shelter. I encourage our community to reach out and help raise awareness for the invaluable work that they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Education Funding

Ms Ganley: Sir Thomas More:

For if you suffer your people to be ill educated, and their manners . . . corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make thieves and then punish them?

Cutting funding to education does not save money. This UCP Education minister's cuts will hurt children, hurt communities, and hurt the bottom line. The evidence is overwhelming that money spent on education, on mental health, on housing, and on social supports generally pays us back in savings in the justice system. The cuts the Education minister is making today will cost far more than she saves. She will save \$10 today that we know will cost \$1,000 in the future.

You want to talk about debt? What about the human potential this Education minister is wasting? What about those who only needed a little support to learn to read when they were six and could have gone on to be contributing members of society instead of spending their lives in and out of jail? This is a debt we will all carry.

Even worse, they talk about performance-based funding. It means that students who come to school hungry get less. It means that students who can't focus because of violence in their home get less. Most of all, it means that those who are the most vulnerable, those students who are at the greatest risk of feeling like they have no path forward to success, will receive less. Those who have witnessed or been victimized by crime, who are vulnerable to gangs just waiting to take advantage will not receive support.

Cuts to education hurt. They hurt people, they hurt society, and they do hurt the bottom line.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Economic Indicators

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night Moody's downgraded Alberta's credit rating, and the Finance minister sprinted to a microphone to say that it was someone else's fault. To be clear, there isn't a word about our government in the Moody's report. What it does do is lay the responsibility for this downgrade squarely on this government's failure to diversify the economy or to get our energy sector moving and on the revenue pressure created by the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. Will this Premier accept the fact that his \$4.7 billion corporate handout is hurting Alberta?

Mr. Kenney: There is no such thing, Mr. Speaker. However, RBC Economics said about this year's budget, "At last, Alberta has a credible plan at hand to make significant inroads [on fiscal balance]." Professor Tombe said: this is a gradual path – it is not an austerity budget – with reasonable economic assumptions that are conservative, and the spending restraint they have built in to balance by 2022-23 is entirely credible. CIBC Capital Markets said, "In our opinion, [the] budget which confirms an accelerated path to balance . . . moves Alberta further along an improving credit track." That's what they said.

Ms Notley: Yet while the oil price remains stable, the credit rating went down.

Moody's says that Alberta's economy remains concentrated and dependent on nonrenewable resources. That's another way of saying that Alberta needs to diversify its economy. Everyone knows this except the Finance minister. He goes on to say that diversification is a long-term luxury. I've got news for this Premier and his Finance minister. It is not a luxury; it's a necessity. Why can't they understand that?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I've got news for the NDP leader. She left this province in a recession, with a jobs crisis and a fiscal crisis.

The National Bank financial markets said about this budget: "There is a new and serious plan to restore the province to fiscal health. It's a deficit reduction plan focused on spending restraint." Laurentian Bank said, "The bottom line for bond investors is that the UCP government can restore Alberta's . . . finances." The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce said: "[It is] a clear path back to balanced budgets . . . [It's] needed to avoid burdening future generations with unmanageable debt."

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what this government did was increase the deficit by \$2 billion. Bottom line: these guys promised Albertans jobs and economic growth, but the economy is in trouble,

and jobs are disappearing. After almost a century Halliburton will close its cementing operations in Alberta. That means significant job losses across the province. These layoffs have to be reported to the government. I'll ask the Premier: how many Albertans have lost their jobs at Halliburton? Or is he just too embarrassed to say because, in fact, he's failing to deliver on his promise to Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we're all concerned for those workers. The truth is that Halliburton laid off far more people in Texas today.

Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous for the NDP leader to talk about an increase in the deficit this year of \$2 billion. Every penny of that is attributable to their reckless crude-by-rail contracts of over \$4 billion, signed during the formal election period and then booked in this fiscal year for this government to take responsibility for their fiscal irresponsibility, in addition to the structural deficit, in addition to raising our debt from \$13 billion to \$65 billion. That's the fiscal disaster they left us with.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition has a second set of questions.

Ms Notley: Sooner or later this Premier is going to have to take responsibility for his own actions.

Health Care Funding

Ms Notley: Now, yesterday he tried to lecture the House, budget documents in hand. To be clear, we've read them, too, Mr. Speaker. The Health budget grows by just under 1 per cent this year while inflation plus population will be more than 3 per cent. Next year it's much worse, just a \$6 million bump at the same time that the Premier will find \$30 million for a secret campaign slush fund, also known as the war room. If the Premier could only be sincere. I know he understands that he's cutting health care in real terms. Why not be honest about it with Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more honest than the numbers. Last year's Health operating budget was \$20.409 billion; this year, \$20.610 billion. The Health budget continues to go up, not down. Now, this is after a 15 per cent increase in recent years. This is by far the largest health care budget in Canada. It is 30 per cent higher than the Canadian average on an age-adjusted basis, yet we have higher infant mortality and lower life expectancy. It's not acceptable. We need to work to find efficiencies.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier stood in this House with a bald-faced claim that the government is not laying off thousands of people, but that's exactly what the AHS letters say: for LPNs, 400 jobs gone; for RNs, 560 jobs gone; for support workers, 2,650 jobs gone; lab workers, 850 jobs gone; and consideration of much more to come. The Premier knows this. How can he be so disrespectful to the people he's sacking and the Albertans who need them by denying it?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what is disrespectful is misleading and creating fear amongst workers as the NDP leader is doing. The letter is very clear. It is a statutory obligation to indicate the total maximum number of . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mr. Kenney: . . . positions that could – the letter uses the word “could” – be affected, and those positions, I hope, are not affected if the unions come to the table in a spirit of compromise to find reasonable savings. But, Mr. Speaker, if positions are affected, it will be disproportionately through attrition and not layoffs. As well,

people will find other positions through contracting out provisions to the private sector.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 1:57.

Ms Notley: These brutal cuts are just the beginning, and the letters sent by AHS make that very plain, notwithstanding the Premier's desire to lawyer up. Bed closures, facility closures, relocation of services, reducing and ceasing of services: all of this is in black and white, words on paper. It's a dangerous path to American-style health care. This is not what the Premier ran on. It is a bait and switch. If the Premier thinks I'm wrong, will he stop running away from debate and defend his position with facts rather than name-calling and half-truths? [interjections]

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, (a) we are debating right now, (b) who specializes in name-calling in this place? The same NDP that's heckling me right now, because they're still so angry seven months later, angry with Albertans for firing them because of their jobs crisis, because of their fiscal crisis, because they increased health spending but got longer wait times. They made us pay more for less. Those are some of the reasons they were fired. We're going to do everything we can to get Alberta out of the hole that the NDP dug us into. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a question.

Rural Police Service

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks a historic tax grab being downloaded onto the people of Alberta. The Premier and his Minister of Justice are celebrating an additional 300 police officers being added to combat rural crime, but this provincial government is not contributing one single dollar. Instead, they are downloading \$200 million onto municipalities, who are already looking at cuts. To the Premier: will you admit that it's actually property tax payers who will foot the bill for more police?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we're proud of the historic partnership that we launched today, the largest investment in rural policing since the march west. It's not lost on me that the members opposite have ignored rural crime. We offered to get all the members opposite on a bus to come down to hear about rural crime. They missed the bus. They've missed the bus on rural crime for four years. They continue to miss the bus on rural crime.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No doubt this government is out spinning this as a historic day for the Premier and the minister. I support adding police, and so does this opposition caucus. What I don't support is massive tax hikes on Albertans already struggling because this government hasn't created one single job. To the Premier: have you determined how much more Albertans will pay in property taxes for these added police?

2:00

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, it is laughable that they say that they support more police on the other end. They had four years to act on rural crime and did not do anything material on the file. [interjections] This is the largest investment, a new partnership, a seat at the table for rural municipalities to make sure they have their voice heard, their concerns heard. Policing is at its best when local representatives have their voice at the table. That's what we did

here. This is historic. We should be proud of this instead of heckling it.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, we did make a commitment and support police in combatting rural crime. The difference is that we put our money where our mouths are. We invested in rural police. We didn't give \$4.7 billion away to already profitable corporations and then ask Albertans to pay out of pocket to keep their communities safe, and we didn't have the audacity to take other people's money and claim that we were making an investment. To the Premier: is hiking taxes for Alberta families really something to celebrate?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of the work that our colleagues on this side of the aisle have done on this matter. We had the president of the RMA, the president of the AUMA at our announcement today. This is truly a partnership where we've listened to Albertans. We have listened to the rural municipalities to find a new path forward that's sustainable. The members opposite put their heads in the sand for four years on rural crime, not this side of the aisle. Rural Albertans know they have a true voice now in government to make sure that their concerns are addressed, to help keep them safe in their communities. They had ignored it for four years, not this side of the aisle.

Community Grant Programs

Ms Goehring: This government's terrible budget will cut funding right from the heart of Alberta communities. They have decided to slash the community initiatives fund by nearly \$57 million. They have also cut the community facility enhancement program by \$13 million. These programs help community groups across the province run community-building events, after school programs, and maintain and upgrade facilities. We have a few leaders from those community leagues here with us in the gallery today. To the minister of culture: can you explain to them and all Albertans why you're gutting funding for community groups to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our ministry has funded \$11.3 million in projects to date. Just over 170 community projects have been funded, including \$95,000, actually, to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, to the Christian Life Center, that hosts a ton of not-for-profits. In this age of fiscal crisis and with civil society onside, I'm quite certain that we are going to be able to continue to fund and grow competency within the communities.

Thank you.

Ms Goehring: Cuts to these programs will have a devastating and lasting impact on how neighbourhoods thrive within our city and our province: that's not me speaking, Mr. Speaker, but a representative from the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues that joined us today to speak out about these horrendous cuts. To the minister: do you really want to be remembered for devastating community leagues here in Edmonton and right across the province?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, what I don't want to be remembered as is a government that spent \$5 million a day on debt servicing, something that that government did. Another thing

I don't want to be remembered for is \$2 billion in stranded assets in our energy industry that is now on the taxpayer. Another thing I don't want to be remembered for is not actually being able to build in our communities. We will continue to invest in communities on this side. Those dollars will be stretched, and we will make sure we're investing. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. It's important for the Speaker to be able to hear the answer to the question as well as the question.

Ms Goehring: Greg Lane from the McCauley Community League said that the cut to CFEP and uncertainty around this government moving the provincial lottery fund into general revenue may, quote, spell the end of our existence. Mr. Lane, who is with us here today, scheduled a meeting with the minister months ago to discuss the changes to these funds, and the minister ultimately stood up Mr. Lane, cancelling the day of. To the Minister of Community and Social Services and the minister of culture: will you agree to meet with Mr. Lane and the other guests today after question period to address their concerns about the changes to these funds?

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to just give a little bit of advice based on the fiasco last week that happened. Before you do a press conference and before you go in front of the media with these questions, potentially the member could actually bring forward her questions here. If she has a legitimate question for me, I'm happy to answer it. As always, our doors are always open. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. The hon. minister of culture is answering the question.

An Hon. Member: She's not.

The Speaker: Order. You might not like the answer, but she is answering.

Mrs. Aheer: As I was saying with my advice, before they decide to go down this absolute fiasco of misinformation, there are many, many opportunities to ask. We will continue to fund. We are invested in communities. Albertans put us here to do that, and we will continue to invest. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Official Opposition will come to order while the Speaker is on his feet.

The hon. the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has the call.

Energy Industry Investment in Alberta

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been struggling to combat low oil prices and limited takeaway capacity. It's been devastating to watch Alberta struggle when less than a decade ago the industry was booming. Investors now see Alberta as a high-cost, high-regulation market. As a direct result, the world's largest and most experienced energy companies are pulling out of Alberta. Since 2015 investment has fallen by 61.3 per cent in the oil and gas sector. Our government has made a number of announcements to attract overall investment to Alberta, to signal that Alberta is once again open for business. Can the Minister of Energy please share any progress that's been made in Alberta's energy to attract new investment?

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you to the member for his question. Just today Canadian Natural released their 2020 budget, their capital plan for 2020, and let me tell you that it's good news. They're planning on spending an additional \$250 million next year. Let me

tell you what that means, Mr. Speaker. It means an addition of 60 new drilling rigs. It means additional rigs, and most importantly it means about 1,000 new jobs in Alberta. This isn't a coincidence. It isn't luck or chance; it's due to our government actions to bring back investment. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given that it is crucial for the government to implement policies that encourage investment in our economy and given that Alberta is a world leader in energy and environmental protection, that would make the world better off with more Albertan and Canadian energy, and given that our energy sector has a key role to play on the world stage as a supplier of oil given that we have the third-highest proven oil reserves in the world, can the minister share any particular actions made by the government that led to the increased investment of CNRL? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Like I said, it isn't coincidence or luck or chance. Let me read you a direct quote from CNRL today: due to the government's recently announced elimination of curtailment for certain conventional drilling in Alberta and its previously announced reduction in income tax rates, CN has increased its 2020 capital budget by approximately \$250 million over 2019 levels. Our plan is working. We're making progress. While the NDP scorched Alberta's economy with their socialist . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given that CNRL is only one announcement that has recently occurred given the depth of Alberta's energy sector, with various forms of energy being produced, and given that we've got a long way to go in attracting more energy companies to return to Alberta, where they were, and given that other companies, like CNRL, have taken note of the work done here to restore investor confidence in Alberta's economy, can the minister provide examples of other recent investments in Alberta that have taken place? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. I almost had a difficult time hearing the question, which I know is a surprise because I almost never have a problem hearing the question.

The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the NDP scorched our economy with their socialist agenda over the last four years, we're doing what we can to bring back that investment, and it's working. Just earlier this week Suncor sanctioned the Forty Mile wind power project in southern Alberta, a capital spend of \$300 million. BHE Canada announced its \$200 million Rattlesnake Ridge wind project. Greengate Power is investing an additional \$500 million in a solar project; Perimeter power, \$200 million in a solar project; and Suncor, \$1.4 billion in a cogen project.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Calgary-McCall is rising.

2:10

Electricity Prices

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government ran on the promise of affordability for the people of Alberta. Page 36 of the

UCP platform was even titled Affordable Electricity for Alberta Consumers. The NDP capped the electricity price at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, a cap this UCP government just lifted, meaning that many Albertans will see electricity prices go up. Can the Minister of Energy please enlighten this House as to how removing this cap creates more affordable electricity for Albertans, or was there a typo in the UCP platform?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich for the NDP to talk about affordability of electricity. You know what each and every Albertan sees on their power bill every single month? It's the Balancing Pool adjustment, and it's a charge to each and every consumer to pay for the NDP's multibillion-dollar fiasco and ideological meddling in the power sector. Their meddling cost over \$1.8 billion, and every consumer in Alberta is paying for it every month on their bill.

Mr. Sabir: Given that this minister's action will cause electricity bills in Edmonton to rise by 3.9 per cent this month alone and given that that announcement was made with little fanfare or notice, as is now common when the UCP government tries to slip in policies they know will make life more expensive, why won't the Minister of Energy tell us who she consulted with before deciding to hike electricity prices for all Albertans, or is this just to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 6.8-cent rate cap was something that the NDP brought in to hide the volatility of their movement towards a capacity market. We cancelled that transition based on extensive consultation with generators, producers, consumer groups, distributors. It was a very, very clear decision and a very easy decision to move back to the energy-only market, and it's working, because as you heard me say earlier, we have attracted more than \$1 billion of new renewable electricity to this province under that new market.

Mr. Sabir: Given that our government was looking out for Alberta consumers when we introduced the cap on electricity prices and introduced stability into the system and given that this minister made the shocking claim that her decision to hike electricity bills came in part at the request of consumers, is the Minister of Energy really claiming that consumers were telling her that they wanted to pay higher electricity bills while big corporations get a massive \$4.7 billion handout? How can she make that claim with a straight face?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, what was running up the cost of electricity in this province is the NDP's ideological meddling in the electricity sector. [interjections] The jeers and heckling from that side won't fix the mess that they made in our electricity sector. Not only did they cause a \$1.8 billion loss to the Balancing Pool, but then they sued the same producers that returned the power contracts. That led to a huge lack of investment certainty. We're cleaning up the mess they made.

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

Early Learning and Child Care Centres

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The three-year early learning child care pilot program will end in just a few months for 22 child care centres across Alberta. Many of these centres have made repeated requests to Children's Services and the minister for any information about whether the program will be extended. They've told me that all they've heard back is radio silence from

the minister. To the Minister of Children's Services on behalf of these 22 child care centres – I'm asking you to respond with a straightforward, yes-or-no answer – will you be extending the ELCC program for these centres beyond March?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said a number of times in this House, the terms of the pilot have not changed since they were introduced by the former government. The first 22 centres: that pilot is scheduled to end at the end of March. We are currently waiting for the data on the pilot project. We have heard from child care providers and parents across the board, some who are in the pilot program, but many across the province have expressed that this program is not working for them. It does not track need, income, wait-list, or employment. We will be working with those 22 centres in the new year.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the minister continues to not provide a straightforward answer, these centres have no choice but to assume that there will be no more support from this government, and given that these centres have to make budget decisions now about what fees to charge parents, what to pay staff, and, in the case of at least some centres I've spoken to, whether they will even be able to stay open, to the minister. Your government was quick to hand out a \$4.7 billion no-jobs, credit-downgrade handout to corporations. Why can't you be as quick to tell these centres, their staff, and families about whether you will support affordable child care for all Albertans?

Ms Schulz: As the member opposite knows, Mr. Speaker, affordability in child care means a number of different things, and every province across this country did different things with the federal grant to address the child care needs of parents in each respective province. What I won't do is commit money we don't have to programs we can't afford, programs that Albertans didn't vote for, like Quebec-style daycare, in the last election, in April. I have committed to be transparent with these child care providers as we make decisions as to what the next steps are going to be. That will likely be in the new year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that one of the key aspects of the ELCC program is not just affordability but early childhood learning to prepare kids for school and identification of developmental and other needs and given that the minister has dismissed universal affordable child care as, quote, ideological and given that the minister has criticized the program because it didn't track income of families, indicating that she doesn't even understand what universal child care means or the program, to the minister: why don't you just come clean and admit that you've already made up your mind to put an end to affordable, accessible, and quality child care because it's more important to you to increase profits for corporations?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the fact that the pilot didn't measure employment or need or wait-lists are things that I heard from Albertans. Once again, the members opposite are completely out of touch with what Albertans have to say. I also want to be clear that the vast majority of these child care centres in the pilot were operational long before this pilot ever came into place. We are going to continue to focus on affordable, high-quality child care that

meets the demands of parents and children across this province. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein is the only one with the call.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My son Patrick's love is water. He and I love to camp and enjoy the lakes across this province. Knowing his uncle's shared love for our lakes, the minister is no doubt aware of the invasive species of quagga, zebra mussels, and Asian carp and their threat to our lakes across the prairies. In fact, it was only last year that millions of zebra mussel shells washed up on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. To the minister: what is your department doing to combat this invasive species from taking hold of our lakes and waterways here in Alberta?

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, aquatic invasive species, particularly zebra mussels, are a very big danger to our province, both to our waterways and our diversity, but also to our agriculture and infrastructure across the province. That's why we've invested \$7.2 million in this budget year into fisheries management, including aquatic invasive species. We have checkpoints all across the border, with the Environment and Parks staff working diligently to keep zebra mussels out of the province. I know, most importantly, that what my nephew Patrick likes the most are our sniffer dogs working for the environment department, who are our top dogs on the front line to protect us from zebra mussels.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. Given that residents in Calgary-Klein also enjoy the many beautiful lakes across this province and given the need to preserve that natural resource for future generations and given that mussels aren't the only issue that our lakes and waterways are dealing with and given that invasive flowering rush crowds out our native plants and has the potential to fill an entire lake if left uncontrolled and given that it has already been established locally in waterways such as Lake Isle, not far from here, Minister, what is the government doing to combat this very real threat to our province's water bodies.

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

2:20

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. Mussels are not the only invasive species that we're concerned about inside our province. Flowering rush is a major concern for the province, particularly at Lake Isle currently. It's a complicated situation that's taking place up in that area. We're working closely with the First Nation communities as well as the municipalities in that area, ultimately looking for a solution where we can continue to deal with the epidemic that's taking place in that lake but also protect our waterways across the province from it spreading.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for your hard work. Given that the minister has also made a promise to take his nephew fishing and given that we also have an issue with invasive fish such as Asian carp, koi, and other pet

store fish like goldfish and given that just a few years back the city of St. Albert removed over two tonnes of fish from various stormwater facilities in local lakes, posing an immediate threat to ecosystems like the Sturgeon River, to the minister: what is this government's plan to combat this issue before rivers such as the Sturgeon are adversely affected?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the hon. member for the question. Aquatic invasive species of all types are a danger to our waterways, including carp and goldfish and other types of aquarium pet fish that are inside this province. That's why we support the Don't Let It Loose campaign across the province, encouraging people not to let any pet fish, either live or dead, be released inside our water systems, and we continue education programs north to south, east to west when it comes to that important issue to be able to protect our waterways, both for recreational fishing but, as well, as mentioned earlier, to protect our important infrastructure when it comes to agriculture.

The Speaker: I'd encourage Patrick to ask some more questions around the Christmas dinner table.

For now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

Education System and Financing

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend at the UCP AGM the governing party voted for a dangerous education voucher model that will cut even more money from our public schools than this government already has. The Minister of Education wouldn't speak in this House when I asked her where she stood on vouchers, but elsewhere she's told parents and trustees that she won't proceed regardless of the AGM vote. To the Premier: will you confirm in this place that the UCP government will not bring in a voucher-style education model to Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to respond to this question on behalf of the Minister of Education. Our party campaigned on supporting and protecting Alberta's long-standing, successful tradition of school choice. Our 2019 election platform was based in large part on the policies passed by UCP members at the 2018 founding AGM, which included support for the status quo. Students attending independent schools continue to be funded at 70 per cent of the base instruction rate that public and separate school students are funded at, and the minister has been extremely transparent that we are consulting on a new funding formula moving forward.

Ms Hoffman: Given that that sounds like a no, given that the resolution from Lacombe-Ponoka said that graduating students are "unemployable and increasingly radicalized by extremist ideologies," and given that yesterday's PISA results showed that Alberta students did exceptionally again this year, ranking eighth highest in the world for math and third highest in the world for science and reading, will the Premier please correct the record for the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, your party, and all Albertans who have been misled by your government and take 35 seconds to express confidence in Alberta students and our public education system?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the PISA results, the minister did speak very publicly about this

yesterday. While we welcome Alberta's climb in global rankings, the increase is a result of a global downward trend. Our government respects the hard work that educators do every single day across our province to prepare students for their assessments, to succeed in their classes and for their futures, but we can and we absolutely will do better. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the Minister of Education and now the minister for children have continued to undermine public education through deep cuts, dismantling a long-overdue curriculum update, and saying that teachers are, quote, only in it for themselves and given that it seems clear that this minister has wilfully led an attack on public education, will the Premier take the holiday time to reflect and come back to this House ready to fight for kids, make the Education minister come back to this House fighting for kids, or consider who should actually be at the cabinet table? It seems like right now all she is doing is what she is told, not doing what the pin on her chest says.

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, our Education minister is doing incredible work on behalf of students across this province. When it comes to the funding formula, the Minister of Education has been incredibly clear and transparent throughout the process. We have maintained education funding at \$8.223 billion, the exact same amount that was in last year's budget, but we can and will do better. The previous government left us in a fiscal disaster. We have kept our campaign commitment to maintain education funding because ensuring that teachers are with students in the classrooms is the most important thing we can have. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Housing for Vulnerable Albertans

Member Irwin: Today the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters released their 2019 data report. Sadly, the numbers are bleak. Every six days in Canada a woman is killed by a current or former intimate partner. Alberta's rates of domestic violence are the highest in the country, and the severity of the violence is increasing. Over 10,000 women, children, and seniors were sheltered in 2018-19, and over 23,000 women and children requesting shelter were turned away due to a lack of capacity. To the minister of status of women. This is a crisis. What are you doing to address it?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I also read the report. As I've said before, sometimes the most important information that you can get is not always the best information that shows us exactly what we need to do to move forward. I'm very honoured to work with a government that has seen increases in funding to shelters and also to be able to work with our stakeholders very closely to find out what those needs are.

Thank you very much for the question.

Member Irwin: Given that a lack of shelter spaces means that more and more vulnerable women and children are put in very precarious situations and given that we know that women fleeing domestic abuse often face the difficult choice between homelessness and returning to their abuser and given that this is particularly an issue in certain communities like Grande Prairie, where a lack of affordable housing means that many women have had to return home, where it's unsafe, to the Minister of Community and Social

Services: have you spoken to women fleeing violence, and will you commit to funding more affordable housing?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I have undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement, both with victims of domestic violence and those who are experiencing homelessness, and what I can say is that our government is very pleased that we're able to maintain funding for women's shelters, and we're doing our level best to make sure that vulnerable Albertans are cared for.

Member Irwin: Given that research suggests that as many as 30 per cent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ2S-plus, often fleeing violent and unsafe home situations, and given that this is something that our government was so proud to make progress on – yet we learned in estimates that this government is not committing to funding, with the Minister of CSS saying that at this point there's no new investment allocated to that – to that minister. We know that without funding, many queer and trans youth are at risk. Why have you cut this funding, and will you commit in the House today to restoring it?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I absolutely disagree with the notion that we have cut any funding. My ministry has received the greatest amount of funding. In fact, our ministry's funding increased by 7.6 per cent. We are working with our community-based organizations to make sure that we're looking at the problems around homelessness, and we're doing our level best to ensure that those who are experiencing these issues are being cared for.

Market Access for Oil and Gas

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, our government campaigned on getting serious about the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion approval as Alberta needs the right economic conditions to attract investment back into our energy sector. There has been uncertainty for far too long, particularly around the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. But that uncertainty ends now. To the Minister of Energy. Proud energy workers in my constituency of West Yellowhead are grateful for your hard work that resulted in getting shovels in the ground on this project. Can you give an update on the progress of TMX and when we can expect to see completion?

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you to the member for that question. In fact, just yesterday I myself alongside the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland attended an event marking the commencement of construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. I can report that the pipe is strung along the ground, along the right-of-way. The earth has been moved. Trenches have been dug, and the president of the Trans Mountain pipeline said that pipe will be in the ground and will be welded within the month. Mr. Speaker, the president said that the project will be built in 30 to 36 months, and we expect the federal government to make sure that that is brought across the finish line. We're looking forward to the completion of this important project.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

2:30

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given the lack of market access resulting in severe bottlenecks for our energy sector and given that many of my constituents rely on this industry to feed their families and given that we know that a strong energy sector makes for a strong Alberta, can the minister please elaborate on how the government will increase market access in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education – of environment.

An Hon. Member: One of the three Es.

Mr. Shandro: Close enough. *Hansard* will fix it.

Mrs. Savage: Close enough.

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need TMX, and we need it to be completed on time. We also need the Enbridge line 3 project to be completed in the United States. It's been completed in Canada, and we're pleased to have heard earlier this week that it's now in service on the Canadian portion. We need these projects to move ahead. We need them to move ahead on time so that we can increase the capacity to move the growing production in Alberta. We're taking steps to reverse the last four years, which has a record of pipeline cancellations, vetoes, and delays.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given that the minister was able to overcome obstacles at almost every turn that had the opportunity to further jeopardize the stability of our already fragile energy market and given that when they were in government, the members opposite actually hired anti-oil activists like Tzeporah Berman to help create obstacles, to the minister. Although significant, Trans Mountain is just one, sole pipeline project. How will this government continue to ensure that more projects like TMX are brought forward?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With positive news and momentum for both Trans Mountain and Enbridge line 3 this week, it's been a good week for pipelines. But we know we need to continue to ensure that these projects can be built in the future. That's why we're talking about Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 and the need to either have those pieces of legislation repealed or seriously changed, that's why I've met with my federal counterpart not once but twice, and that's why we're taking a group to Ottawa with the Premier next week to talk about the issues important to Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has the call.

UCP Nomination and Leadership Contests

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At their annual general meeting this past weekend the UCP had a chance to stand up against their leader's rejecting accountability in Bill 22 when they were presented with a motion that read, "the UCP shall provide for fair and impartial nomination election contests and leadership vote processes." Shockingly, this motion was defeated. I guess fair elections just aren't the way with this Premier. To the Minister of Justice: now that your boss's undemocratic actions have been endorsed by your party members, which level of accountability will you be firing next?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to be a member of the United Conservative Party, that is being led by a Premier who for the entire time that he's been a leader has been dedicated to an open nomination process. That's a contrast with the party that's across the way, that doesn't believe in democracy inside their party process. That's their business, though. How our party runs our party is our business. We trust members to pick the nomination candidates for their constituencies. We will always be committed to

an open and fair transparent nomination process, the complete opposite of the . . .

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

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the rationale for this policy the UCP rejected was that “if . . . leadership campaigns are biased, or appear to be biased, the credibility of these democratic processes in the eyes of the party members and the public will be undermined” and given that surely by now the credibility of the current UCP leader’s campaign has been undermined, to the minister: will you support the call by Democracy Watch! to expand the RCMP investigation to include the firing of the Election Commissioner, similar to the call they made into Trudeau and SNC-Lavalin?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, Bill 22 has nothing to do with anything associated with criminal investigations and/or the RCMP. All it does is take the election process to be brought under the Chief Electoral Officer so one office maintains all investigations. That officer, an independent officer of this Legislature, has confirmed that is the case. Through you to Democracy Watch! what I would ask them is: what are their feelings on the opposition party calling on the Lieutenant Governor to do something that would be completely undemocratic and overturn a decision of the elected body of this House? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Government House Leader still doesn’t want to be open and transparent about who the special prosecutor is and given – I will try this again – that the minister himself may have been a victim of the fraudulent practices surrounding this Premier’s leadership campaign but now given that he’s playing an integral role in removing all accountability for fair elections in the province, to the minister. It’s time to clear the air and be accountable. Who is the special prosecutor, and did you help to pick them?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that’s pretty rich coming from the opposition. This side of the House has been very transparent. The Minister of Justice has already released a statement. I refer that hon. member to that in regard to the issue.

But that party’s leader admitted that two of her members, when she was Premier, were accused of serious sexual misconduct, that an investigation happened, confirming that two of those members were accused of sexual misconduct, and that she had to take action. She then hid that from Albertans. She hid that from Albertans, Mr. Speaker. So which ones of those members over on that side of the aisle are the people that resulted from that investigation finding out that they had conducted serious sexual misconduct? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Education Funding

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-West Henday is home to many young families. Many children who live in the community attend public, Catholic, and francophone schools. These schools are both mature and new, and the students who study in them deserve to be in modern schools with reasonable class sizes and supports for students with special needs close to home. Why is the minister telling boards to lay off electricians, plumbers, and roofers to save teachers’ jobs when she is the one who is cutting their funding? Isn’t it the minister who should be responsible for restoring it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children’s Services.

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. As Budget 2019 was developed, we were unable to predict how insurance markets would adjust insurance premiums for school boards in this upcoming year. As a result of those rising premiums – and we have spoken a lot about this in the House – in a variety of different sectors, we are providing boards with the flexibility to repurpose the operating portion of their IMR grant to support classroom or school-based staffing costs.

Mr. Carson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that it used to be illegal for school boards to increase school fees mid-year and given that the Education minister has changed the law and now families in Rocky View, Lethbridge, and Greater St. Albert Catholic have all been hit with school bus fee increases and given that I expect fees will soon rise for my constituents in Edmonton, too, will the Education minister give the constituents of Edmonton-West Henday any assurance that they won’t be the next ones to get saddled with the same mid-year burden that she has downloaded onto so many other Alberta families?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children’s Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has placed a significant priority on education and education funding, and that is why we maintained education funding at \$8.223 billion, the same as last year. Let me say it again, please: \$8.223 billion. We also, though, respect the local autonomy of school divisions to make decisions that best reflect their unique needs in their communities.

Mr. Carson: Well, given that a bill of more than \$300 per child just before Christmas is a significant burden and given that with this government’s failure to create jobs, spur economic growth, or diversify, many families are still struggling and given that the \$4.7 billion corporate handout from this Premier is a massive, massive failure, Mr. Speaker, will the minister and former head of the Catholic trustee association of Alberta explain to families why they should forgo Christmas presents for their children this year to pay for her failure to get them to school?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, once again – I don’t think I can be more clear – our Minister of Education has maintained education funding at the exact same levels as last year. The Minister of Education has been working incredibly hard with school divisions. We do have a fiscal disaster left to us by the previous government. We all have to look at ways that we can be more efficient with the dollars that we have to ensure that teachers are in the classrooms with students. But I can tell you that the minister has been very clear that, obviously, we respect the local autonomy of school divisions. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Natural Gas Industry Support

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government was elected on three main priorities: to get Albertans back to work, to make life better for Albertans, and to stand up for our province. An overwhelming majority of Albertans chose us to fulfill these promises, and we are proudly working hard to keep them. One sector that these priorities resonated with is our natural gas industry, which for far too long was neglected by previous governments. Jobs have been lost, companies have gone bankrupt, and our producers

were left feeling isolated and ignored. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas: what is this government doing to ensure that moving forward, our natural gas players have a say in how we revitalize this critical industry?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My office has been implementing key recommendations from the Roadmap to Recovery for the benefit of the natural gas industry. We're committed to consulting with the industry. By the way, I don't mean the drive-by consultations that the NDP tried to do with the farmers. I mean real, meaningful consultations. That's why my office announced today a two-month engagement process where we're going to be reaching out to the entire value chain of natural gas producers. I have to stress that this will be the single largest consultation ever done. They have a lot to say, and we're going to listen.

Mr. Jones: Given that this government has already implemented several of the recommendations included in the Roadmap to Recovery report, which have had significant positive impacts on our natural gas sector, and given that many of these recommendations have included short-term actions that have successfully brought much-needed and immediate stability to our natural gas sector and given that our natural gas industry requires long-term, tangible changes that will address the systemic issues plaguing our natural gas industry, to the associate minister: can you please provide an example of a long-term action that this government is taking to continue growing our natural gas sector?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's imperative that we create a strong vision and brand for Alberta's natural gas. We need to do that because the NDP worked as hard on the natural gas file as they did on their shadow budget. [interjections] Look, there they go again. The NDP is heckling. They're going hysterical, and they're lighting their hair on fire. Why? Because they can't handle the truth. Well, let me tell you that the truth is that we're going to put Alberta natural gas back on the map. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Jones: Given that the former NDP government's refusal to acknowledge the dire state of our natural gas sector means that time is of the essence and given that the quick action of this government has already saved thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of investment and given that the natural gas sector as a whole still requires decisive and immediate action from this government to continue saving jobs, can the associate minister please tell this House when we can expect to hear about the results of this engagement? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward to getting the results of these engagement sessions. It is absolutely imperative because the Leap Manifesto NDP and their Extinction Rebellion allies will not be happy until they've succeeded in shutting in every gas well. Well, that's not going to happen on our watch. We got elected on a campaign to stand up and fight on behalf of all Albertans. That includes oil and gas workers. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

In 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Carbon Pricing and Climate Change Strategy

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the greatest fallacies of the previous NDP government was a carbon tax, and now we have a looming federal carbon tax, but the NDP and the federal Liberals are not considering the implication of this regressive tax on products that are inelastic, a tax that punishes those who are unable to adjust, a tax that punishes families who buy gas to drive their kids to dance or soccer practice. There is only so much Albertans can do to avoid these increased costs in one of the largest and coldest countries on Earth.

The federal government has received a recommendation that in order to meet Paris targets, the carbon tax would need to rise to \$200 or \$300 a tonne. In an attempt to reduce emissions, the federal Liberals will increase the cost of products that hard-working Albertans use every day. After all, this is Canada. You will have to buy natural gas to heat your home no matter the price. Most Albertans do not have tens of thousands of dollars lying around to buy a more fuel-efficient car or to retrofit their homes as a way to mitigate these additional costs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not advocating for inaction. However, we need to fight for the environment while also supporting our industry and a reduction in global emissions. As Albertans we believe in utilizing new technology and innovation. With our partners in the energy industry we need to be looking for a stronger symbiotic relationship with the environment. As an example, it would be great to see Asian markets utilizing natural gas over coal and for provinces in our own country to utilize waste treatment over dumping sewage into the rivers and oceans. We have the ability to solve these problems. However, protecting the environment is so much more than just carbon. There are countless facets that need to be considered. Albertans are world-class leaders in environmental stewardship, and it's time that the world caught up to us. We need to focus on exporting that expertise around the world. A local tax will not solve a global problem.

Thank you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has a statement.

Mental Health Awareness

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I learned that the gentleman who took his own life on Monday just outside of this Chamber, on the steps of the Legislature, suffered from depression and potentially PTSD. His name was Ken Chan. He was a retired military veteran, who served his country for 25 years. In a CBC news article the family advised that they hope that "by discussing the death [it] may be able to help someone else in crisis." PTSD and depression are real. Mental health is important, and we need to talk about it. The stigma around mental health needs to be addressed.

For myself this news has been deeply upsetting. This has really rocked me to my core. I'm very aware that I'm not doing well as a result of this news, and I am grateful that my colleagues have been checking in and asking how I'm doing. It's also important that we check in with our Legislature staff as this may affect everyone differently in their own time. I know for myself in the past I didn't feel that I wanted to let anyone know what I was going through. The

stigma is to show that it's not bothering you. I didn't want to let others down by showing my vulnerability. But there is strength in showing vulnerability; that is how you get help. We need to come together and help each other and check in on one another. If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out, and please call the mental health helpline at 1.877.303.2642.

I did not meet Ken Chan, but I'm deeply grateful for his service to this country, and I truly hope that he is at peace at this time. My heart goes out to the Chan family, the military community, and all of those who are touched by this devastating news.

Thank you.

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

Federal NDP Energy Policies

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, folks, "it's going to be a ring-a-ding-dong dandy." If you don't recognize that quote, it was made by the late, great *Stampede Wrestling* announcer Ed Whalen, who passed in 2001. *Stampede Wrestling* was an entertaining, staged weekly drama and a personal favourite of my grandfather Lesley Tennent. I think the entire province stopped on Saturday afternoons to watch the antics. I used the reality of *Stampede Wrestling* as a comparison to the NDP standing up for the Alberta oil and gas industry. While entertaining to watch the antics, we all knew that it was staged.

On September 24, 2019, Jagmeet Singh posted a reality check to Justin Trudeau on the NDP's website. It simply stated, "You. Bought. A. Pipeline." A simplistic and childish show of his true thoughts on oil and gas. To Mr. Singh a pipeline is shameful. Mr. Singh also said in an interview: I believe the federal government has significant constitutional powers, but I don't think it's effective to impose pipelines on communities; it's not the way to go ahead. Mr. Singh views pipelines as an imposition and not a way to bring jobs and economic success to the province and country. But I wouldn't expect anything else from the party that supports the Leap Manifesto or appoints anti-oil activists like Tzeporah Berman to the oil sands advisory group.

Now, with the obviously anti-oil, antipipeline sentiments of their leader Jagmeet Singh out in the open – and make no mistake; there's no difference between a provincial NDP and a federal NDP – it's time for our NDP opposition to pick a lane and stay in it. Stand up and denounce your party's stance on the pipelines. Stand up and denounce your party's Leap Manifesto and its ties to the tar sands campaign. Tear up your membership and sit as an independent, or do nothing and show Albertans what is really behind the orange curtain, just a bunch of anti-oil, anti-Alberta protestors, tar sands and Leap Manifesto activists. "In the meantime and in-between time," this NDP has just been "another edition of *Stampede Wrestling*." Thank you, Mr. Whalen, for your many, many years of entertainment.

2:50

Presenting Petitions

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table a petition. This is an additional 650 signatures from Albertans from across the province, which is in addition to the 1,700 signatures on a petition I filed earlier this session. The petition is "to urge the Government of Alberta to continue the Early Learning and Child Care program (also known as \$25/day child care) at all participating child care centres beyond the 2020 or 2021 pilot project end date and to expand the ELCC program to more sites across Alberta."

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 20(1) of the Auditor General Act it is my pleasure as the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to table the following two reports from the office of the Auditor General, Alberta Community and Social Services: Income Support for Albertans; and Travel Alberta: Managing the Risks of Cloud Computing. Copies of these reports will also be provided to members.

Thank you very much, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my good friend the Minister of Energy I have five copies of written responses to questions asked at Committee of Supply on November 19, 2019.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. Number one is from the CorpEthics history on their website, by Michael Marks, where they actually brag about shutting down the Keystone XL pipeline.

My second is five copies of the tar sands campaign strategy that was written in 2008. It very clearly shows an attack on Alberta's oil and gas industry.

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of over a hundred e-mails my office received about the changes to pensions that government introduced in Bill 22. These hard-working Albertans have contributed to these pensions with their own money. They're worried about the UCP government's recent changes to pensions, and they are very clear that they are telling the government: keep your hands off my pension.

The Speaker: Calgary-McCall, please.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a report showing how most of the continent's bird species face high climate risk because of shifting climate conditions. I have the copies.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Mr. Sabir: I have another one.

The Speaker: Oh, correction. Continue.

Mr. Sabir: Another one is a copy of an e-mail from a concerned Albertan sent to the constituency office of Edmonton-Glenora, essentially sharing their concerns about how the cuts to education will impact their workplaces. I have the requisite number of copies.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of e-mails from the constituents from Sherwood Park, from Calgary-Currie, and from Red Deer-North who have sent e-mails and who are concerned about this government's approach with private schools and vouchers and who are concerned about the deep and significant cuts to education.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by St. Albert.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of letters here that have been sent to my office – some of them have been sent to other MLAs in the province; for example, a number here are from folks who live in Red Deer – who are deeply concerned about the attack on public education, a move towards a voucher model as endorsed by the governing party, and specifically one that I will mention who talks about being a 25-year cabinetmaker living in Red Deer, feeling that his profession isn't being respected by targeted education cuts.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table copies of the speech made December 2 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in remarks to the 25th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Climate Change Convention in Madrid.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you. I have a letter from Ms Strychalski, titled Budget Cuts, to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Ms Strychalski is an educational assistant, and she's concerned that the cuts will make it far harder to teach children.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of a letter from David Park, a former rap program firefighter, who warns the government of the negative consequences of eliminating the rap program firefighters. I have the requisite five copies to table.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Edmonton-Meadows.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first tabling is a number of e-mails from folks all across the province who are quite concerned about this government's pension grab, particularly from a number of teachers.

The second tabling I have is from an educator who is quite concerned about all the cuts to education, and she's provided a very eloquent explanation of why she's so troubled.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows, followed by Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the article by Dominic Rushe, We Are a Cautionary Tale: Kansas Feels the Pain of Massive Trump-style Tax Cuts.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you for very much. I have several tablings here, Mr. Speaker. An article here from the *Edmonton Sun* titled UCP Rightfully Scaling Back the Public-sector Gravy Train, which shows that there are multiple opinions on what the government is doing here, not just the NDP version.

I have another article here from Calgary from the CBC, UCP Fiscal Plan Far From an Austerity Budget, Economist Says: Trevor Tombe Says Government Cuts Are Modest and Uphold Platform Promise To Balance Budget.

I also have one here from the *National Post* titled Trudeau and the Liberals Just Won't Stop Saying Things that Anger the West. It's an article that shows that we have our difficulties in dealing with Ottawa.

Another one here from the *National Post*, Some Good News for the West: You Have More Friends Out East than You Realize. It makes me realize that maybe we have more enemies here in Alberta, and they're probably sitting across the aisle from us right now.

An article here again from the *National Post* that says All Pain and No Gain: Alberta's Unpopular Carbon Tax Rises by 50% this Week, Fires Up Opposition. Obviously, this talks about the carbon tax that the members opposite love so much and want to have back, I guess.

I have another article from the *Globe and Mail* that says, Alberta Faces New Reality as NDP Raises Taxes. It says, "Alberta's [NDP] Finance Minister grudgingly admits it, and the province's opposition proclaims [that] the old Alberta Advantage is dead." That obviously goes back to the time when the previous Finance minister was at work in this province. I'm not sure what he was doing, but he was there anyways.

I have another article here from the *Calgary Herald*: Who Pays the Cost of Higher Corporate Taxes? If Companies Pass the Bill Down the Line It Could Mean Shrinking Paycheques, Higher Prices. Obviously, that's exactly what happened when the NDP raised taxes.

I have another article here from CFIB: CFIB Says NDP Needs Debate on the Alberta Economy. I guess this goes back to 2016. It says here: "When so many entrepreneurs are shedding jobs, and at serious risk of failure, that spells serious, fundamental trouble for Alberta. Obviously . . ."

The Speaker: Hon. member, I would appreciate less commentary and more tabling if you have more.

Mr. Loewen: Just a couple left. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the *Calgary Sun*: Reigniting the Economy Requires Bold Action. Obviously, that's the action that this government has taken to bring the economy back to order here in Alberta.

One last one, Mr. Speaker: Advantage? What Advantage? [The NDP] Government's Policies Have Virtually Eliminated Alberta's Competitive Edge. It's from the *Edmonton Sun*.

Thank you very much. [interjections]

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

Speaker's Ruling Tabling Documents

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're at tablings, and, well, we've seen a significant use of tablings by both sides of the House. I'm not sure this was the original intent of tablings. Nonetheless, we are where we are. Perhaps you were thinking of Judy Bressmer on her last day, with respect to ensuring that there was lots to be done.

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I'll move as Government House Leader, with my ability in the standing orders, to extend Routine to allow the Clerk to do the tablings that I'm sure she would like to do today.

The Speaker: Agreed.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Tabling Returns and Reports (continued)

Mr. Dreshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have one tabling. It's from the *Alberta Farmer Express*, that was referenced earlier

today when we were debating Bill 26. It's titled Alberta's New Farm Safety Act Gets Warm Response.

The Speaker: Exactly how you table a document. Is there anyone else?

Hon. members, I do have one tabling today. I have six copies of a revised report from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

3:00

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mrs. Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services, responses to questions raised by Ms Renaud, the hon. Member for St. Albert, and Mr. Sabir, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, November 16, 2019, Ministry of Community and Social Services 2019-20 main estimates debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. At approximately 1:57 the hon. Opposition House Leader raised a point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), (j). At the time, at 1:57, the Premier was responding to a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition where he, in his response, accused her of misleading. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I know that the Premier knows that that allegation against another member, as you've ruled in the past, is out of order. Now, I appreciate the fact that in about 15 seconds the Government House Leader will jump up and clarify that what he meant was something along the lines of: the opposition was misleading. I mean, I think it's important that members are aware of and pay special attention to the words and language that they use in this House, and from the fact that we know the hon. Premier has spent significant time in this House and in Ottawa, he should be a little more cautious with his words.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I was going to take a little swipe, but I will not.

The Speaker: Teamwork makes the dream work.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anyways, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, so I don't know what was said, but what I will say is this. Clearly, the Premier was indicating . . .

Ms Hoffman: Sorry. Withdraw.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I know the former Deputy Premier and deputy leader of the NDP may want to rise on a point of order. Through you to her, I would suggest she waits for her turn.

I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but the Premier definitely was talking at length about the NDP misleading Albertans. However, he may have misspoken in the heat of the moment. If he did, I am happy to withdraw that comment on his behalf.

The Speaker: Thank you. I appreciate the . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Did you just call a point of order?

Mr. Jason Nixon: I can't call a point of order right now, but I will in a minute.

The Speaker: That is correct.

Well, I appreciate the withdrawal. In fact, you are correct. He did make a statement that said, "What is disrespectful is misleading and creating fear amongst workers as the NDP leader is doing." I appreciate the withdrawal.

Hon. members, I consider the matter dealt with and 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: Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 20

Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019

The Chair: We are on amendment A5 as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West. Are there any speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will – the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's always a pleasure to rise and catch your eye, even at the most late of moments. My apologies. I wasn't quick enough to the draw there.

I think it's really important, when we look at this bill and we look at the amendment before us and look at how we want to move forward, that we consider very carefully and do think about how we talk to people – right? – that we talk to people and understand the issues and the impact that we're having on people.

Madam Chair, amendment A5 is very simple, I think. It's something that all governments should aspire to do. It's something that all governments should aspire to have in their repertoire, and that's the ability to actually talk to the people they're representing – right? – to actually have the conversations and understand the impacts that will be happening to the constituents.

When we look at the ministers that are sitting in our benches today and with us all the time, Madam Chair, they don't really seem to understand the impacts. Right? That seems to be the ongoing problem, that they don't understand the impacts of these changes. When they go in and they make these big, American-style, omnibus changes, with these big, American-style, omnibus bills, you have far-reaching impacts, and it affects every single sector of our economy. It affects every single family. That's something that's very concerning.

When you do this and you move quickly, as the government is trying to do with Bill 20, when they're trying to move so quickly in this omnibus style, it means that often there will be no understanding of how those impacts will affect individuals. There is no understanding. I believe it's important that when we talk about these enrolment targets, when we talk about how there are these goals for how many people should be in each class, we have this opportunity to consult with those institutions, with their faculties, with the students, especially with the students.

Madam Chair, we talk all the time in this House and the Conservatives in particular and the government in particular love to talk about how we're not here to choose winners and losers – that we're not here to choose winners and losers – but the government has then gone and given themselves the abilities in this bill to pick those winners and losers in postsecondary education, to pick the enrolment targets that they will have in postsecondary education,

without any consideration to actually understanding what the needs of the industry will be, without any consideration or understanding of what the needs of the students and the faculties will be.

Madam Chair, I know that the minister wants to do the right thing here. He wants to be able to have the ability to have some dynamic targets here, but without any understanding, without any consideration, and without any consultation you can create very, very difficult situations. You can create situations where, for example, suddenly the competitive averages to enter some of these programs are way out of whack, can be rising by, let's say, 15 per cent or more or 20 per cent or more in some institutions. That can be very concerning.

I know that when I was entering university in my computing science program, that was a competitive program. Just over one year the competitive average changed 7 per cent, I believe, and that's even concerning. Students in, say, grade 11, in looking at what institutions they want to enter and where they want to enrol, want to have some stability. They want to understand how they need to apply and where they need to apply. But when the minister gives himself this unilateral authority to make significant changes without consulting, without understanding the needs of these students, and without understanding the needs of the institutions and the students, that's where you can see some very concerning changes moving forward. Right? That's where you can see some actions that will have negative outcomes, outcomes that the minister could not possibly foresee.

That's not a slight on the minister. The minister has the opportunity to foresee some of these problems, not all of them but some of them. The minister certainly is able to have that conversation if he would agree to consult, right? The minister, for whatever reason – and maybe it's direction from this Premier – doesn't want to consult. I know this government has spoken at length about how they move so quickly that there's no time for consultations and that consultations are for things that aren't important. That's what this government has said. That's what they said during the campaign. It's what they have said here in this House as well, that they want to move extremely quickly with their legislation.

But this is a perfect example of where they've gotten that wrong. They need to slow down. They need to talk to the universities, the postsecondary institutions, the colleges, the trade schools. They need to have those conversations that allow them to understand what is actually going on, that allow them to understand what is actually happening in these classrooms, that allow them to understand what is actually happening in terms of enrolment, and that allow them to understand what is actually happening in terms of students wanting to enter different programs, Madam Chair. That's really important. Postsecondary education is one of the greatest equalizers, right after primary education. Postsecondary education allows people to earn more over their lifetime, allows people to be more educated, allows people to have more opportunities to access different jobs.

We believe this is really, really important. We believe it's really, really important to support students being able to access what they want, being able to support students being able to enter the fields they want and to have the support they need in these programs. But when the minister decides to unilaterally not do any consultation and to make significant changes to how the enrolment targets will be made without talking to even the affected faculties and students and the public institutions, Madam Chair, that's what's problematic.

3:10

When the students aren't at the table and when the faculties aren't at the table, we know that these effects will not work for them,

right? The minister would have done well to have listened to some of the students, to have them come and talk to him. I know that many of the organizations that represent students have been talking to the minister and talking to many MLAs in this Chamber, myself included, Madam Chair.

When these students come and talk to us, they speak again and again and again about how important it is to have a voice. But the minister, by rejecting this amendment – and I believe the minister will reject this amendment, and that's unfortunate – is telling students that they don't deserve a voice, that their voice is not important, that the needs of the people that are actually attending these institutions, paying their tuition, and trying to learn and give themselves a leg-up in life, Madam Chair, are not important. That's what this minister is telling them – right? – and that's something that's very disappointing. It's very unfortunate that we're seeing that, and it's very unfortunate that this is the precedent that this government is setting.

This government is showing that they are not in it for the working people, for the students, for the faculties. What they're in it for is their friends and donors who are part of their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. I think that's the type of conversation that we're having here. It's becoming abundantly clear that this minister does not care enough, in my opinion – he can rise and correct me at any opportunity. Clearly, he does not understand or does not care that the needs of the students need to be heard, the students and the people entering postsecondary institutions and the people that are going to be enrolled in postsecondary and trying to further their lives in some of the most formative years of young people's lives, with some of the opportunities for them to learn great skills in those years and stay and apply them here in Alberta. This minister does not think that those voices are important: the very people that we are trying to help, the very people we are trying to teach, the very people we are trying to engage and ensure have a strong path into postsecondary.

I think it's concerning. I think it's concerning when the minister doesn't seem to understand when we're talking about things like enrolment targets and we're talking about things like changing them and playing with the numbers, as it were, Madam Chair. But the minister needs to consider that it's not just about the numbers, right? It's about the people. It's not just about how we can fiddle a couple of percentage points over here or a couple of percentage points over there. It's actually about the people. It's actually about the students. Postsecondary institutions aren't a spreadsheet. Some of the administrators may think that they are, but indeed it actually is about trying to educate our students, have more learned people, and engage in things like research and development. Those are very important things. But at the core of it, at the core of what a university does, is that we bring people into universities and they come out with more information. They go in to learn. Those are the people that are the most affected by these changes.

When this minister chooses not to even consult with them, the people that our postsecondary institutions are there for, the students, when this minister says, "We don't need to consult with students; their opinion won't matter for us in this because we can set those enrolment targets and we can change what makeup they're in," that's very concerning. That's the type of thing that's very concerning. Those are the people – and perhaps the minister needs to be reminded – that it is his role to protect and to ensure have the best possible learning environment, have the best possible environment to grow and learn in in, again, in some of the most formative years.

When we look at this omnibus bill, we look at the vast, sweeping changes that are being brought forward in this omnibus Bill 20. We look at this relatively simple amendment, amendment A5, that says:

well, maybe the minister, before moving so quickly forward, should actually just talk to people. Maybe he should actually understand what the changes that are going to be made will do. Maybe the minister should actually go in and listen to students, not just go in with a predetermined consultation that has a predetermined outcome, Madam Chair, but actually talk to those students and say: "What are your needs? What are your requirements? What do you want out of your education?" Those are the types of discussions where I think many students, whether they're in high school thinking about entering postsecondary or are already in postsecondary, whether that's a trade school or a college or a university, would have a lot to say to the minister. They'd have a lot to say about how they don't believe things like a 23 per cent tuition hike is valuable to them and that they don't believe their student loan rates should be going up 1 per cent, which, I believe, is over \$7,000 over the life of an average student loan, Madam Chair.

While we've had these conversations, we've seen the government make significant changes without consultation already, but perhaps in this case, when we're talking about how people enter school, postsecondary, the minister would stop for one second and actually engage because that's the sign of good governance – right? – to represent the people that sent you here. Those students are among the people that sent us here, Madam Chair. Indeed, in his role as the Minister of Advanced Education, that is one of his largest stakeholders, the people that he is ostensibly trying to educate. I think that it's very important that we have these conversations. I think that it's very important that this legislation reflects that, that this amendment is put forward so that we can have the understanding that these students do deserve consultation.

Madam Chair, they deserve consultation. It's not a thing where the government should come in and just say: oh, these cute little student groups, we'll just listen to them for a couple of days. That's not what should be going on here. What should be going on is that they should have this right in legislation right here to have their voices heard at the table. They should have their voices heard, and people should understand because in any other industry and in any other field, when we make these types of changes, the ministers always talk about how they've gone in and talked to all these groups, talked to all these different organizations, talked to all these stakeholders. But the Minister of Advanced Education, being responsible for our postsecondary institutions, really has very few stakeholders: the postsecondary institutions themselves, of course; perhaps some of the industries that will have uptake from the students who graduate from the postsecondary institutions. Of course, the number one stakeholder for someone who's the Advanced Education Minister would be the people receiving the advanced education in our postsecondary institutes.

When the minister decides that "Well, I don't need to hear from those people; it's not very important for me, and it's not very important for our government to hear from those people, those students," that's concerning. It's concerning to me because it means that the minister, perhaps, does not really understand what the breadth of this job is supposed to be, right? The minister, perhaps, does not really understand that he should actually be trying to protect and engage those students, right? Those students are the ones that are going to be deciding what streams they want to enter, what programs they want to enter, what degree programs or diploma programs or trade programs they want to enter. Whatever it is, those types of changes are going to affect these young people for decades to come – right? – for really their whole lives. For young people that are entering postsecondary institutions now, whether it's college, trade school, or university, it's actually going to shape how they live and how they work for almost the rest of

their lives, Madam Chair, and for most people the majority of their lives. Those are the types of conversations that we need to be having with these students, with young people, and talking about: what would be the best for you to be able to have a fulfilling life and a great work life?

Madam Chair, the minister, I think, perhaps doesn't understand that because this amendment is very simple. It says that maybe we should actually talk to those people and understand what their needs are and understand what their concerns are and understand why they may want or not want certain targets in certain ways and competitive averages that would change in certain ways, and what not. Of course, I think that it's important that we stand here and that we talk about these issues.

Again, I believe that the minister will vote this down, but when the minister votes against this, we will see very clearly that the people that the Advanced Education minister is tasked with educating, the students, are secondary to him, and that's extremely concerning. That's extremely concerning because it is contrary to what I believe his mandate should be, which is to ensure that those students are given the best possible opportunity to succeed in their lives and that they are given the best possible education so that they can have the most fulfilling lives that they can have.

I think that it's very interesting that we're seeing time and time again this Conservative government move, as they say, so quickly forward with this, without any consultation. I think it's very concerning and very telling that they're also willing to do things like give away \$4.7 billion to the wealthiest corporations. They're also willing to do things like Americanize our health care and in this case, Madam Chair, actually, I think, Americanize our education and our postsecondary education in many ways, which I think many Canadians and Albertans would not like or do not like.

3:20

I think that's the type of thing that speaks to our values, right? I think over here on this side of the House we think it's important that we actually engage with our constituents. We think it's important that we actually talk to our constituents and understand what those needs are. We think it's important that we actually understand what impacts this will have on families. On that side of the House, Madam Chair, perhaps they're a little blinded by ideology. Perhaps they're a little bit blinded by this desire to push forward. But what's going to happen is that there are going to be real impacts on people, right? There are going to be real impacts on families. There are going to be real impacts on students. Those are the people who are going to suffer, right? Those are the people that are going to have worse lives, basically. It's actually really unfortunate.

I know some of the members opposite are laughing here and whatnot, Madam Chair, but the reality is that this is a decision that young people have to live with for the rest of their lives, right? The changes we make today are going to affect people of approximately my age, a little bit younger now, for the rest of their lives, right? That's something that is very, very concerning, that this government doesn't think it's important to have those conversations, doesn't think it's important to have those consultations, doesn't think it's important to actually hear from the people we're affecting.

That's why we're here as the opposition, Madam Chair. We're going to bring those voices here to ensure that the government hears because, I mean, it is their job to listen to what the opposition has to say. I know it's in their talking points now, their key message, that they will not be lectured by the opposition. Well, here's a news flash. They've been here for two sessions now, a spring and a fall sitting, so perhaps they should have figured it out, but if they haven't, that's actually their jobs. It's their jobs to be here and debate and listen to what we have to say.

If they choose not to and they put their earplugs in, that's their prerogative, Madam Chair. I don't think Albertans appreciate that. I don't think Albertans appreciate them basically holding an affront to democracy, but I think it's important that we have those conversations. I think it's important that we have these conversations because the people that are being affected have the opportunity right here in this amendment to have a better life, right? We have the opportunity to make this better for them. We have the opportunity to make this more stable for them and to have those consultations.

Perhaps the minister is right. If he wants to make a change and he wants to change the target 10 per cent and then perhaps all the students agree with him, that would be wonderful. But we will never know because the minister refuses to consult. The minister refuses to engage and refuses to have those consultations. That's the type of thing that's concerning. If the minister knew he was right and if the government members knew they were right and truly believed that what they are saying is the right thing to do and the right way to move forward, the government would not be afraid of consultation, right? It's really, really telling when the government is afraid of accepting an amendment that just says: let's do some consultation. Right? That's what's really telling. It's really telling that the government is afraid of actually having these conversations, is afraid of letting the opposition stand up on this, afraid of having students actually talk to the minister. When they're afraid of actually engaging with the public, Madam Chair, that's what's telling. It's telling because it means the government knows that they're going to make mistakes but don't want to own up to it. I think this is one of those mistakes, to not allow this engagement, not allow this consultation. I think this is one of those mistakes.

The government, again, will reject this amendment, I believe, Madam Chair, and what we'll see is that, basically, students will not have a voice and will never know if they made the right decision or not. Even if they did make the right decision, Albertans will never know because they didn't consult. They chose not to. They were too scared to, and that's a little bit disappointing.

I'd encourage all members to vote for this amendment. I guess that will soon be determined, Madam Chair. I look forward to hearing from the rest of my colleagues. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just trying to figure out where to start, so many things said by the member opposite which are completely false and inaccurate and couldn't be further from the truth. So I just need a moment to try to wrap my head around – maybe I'll just point to the facts. I think that might be a good place to start. You know, we can just talk wildly off the top of our heads about things that could be and may be, but I would just like to talk about the facts.

You know, I encourage the member – maybe he hasn't had an opportunity – to actually look at the changes that are being proposed within the bill, particularly on page 64. I'm going to read it out just to provide some clarity. It says here very clearly in black and white: "The Minister, in consultation with public post-secondary institutions." So there's not a "may." There's not an "and." There's not an "if." It says there very clearly: "The Minister, in consultation."

So I don't understand. The member opposite has gone on a 20-minute tirade about consultation. It's quite interesting to talk about consultation. If I remember correctly, they were the ones who introduced a carbon tax without even telling Albertans about it, so it's interesting that they want to talk about consultation when their record and history on consultation is particularly challenging.

Madam Chair, it's right here in black and white: "The Minister, in consultation." Again, I'm struggling a little bit trying to wrap my head around how to begin. It's in there in black and white. The member opposite can see that.

I know the member opposite has also talked a little bit about the importance of engaging and consulting with students. That is the number one priority for me in my role, ensuring that I'm taking the time to engage and consult with our students. I've had a quick look at some of the numbers as the member was going on. By my count I think in the past seven months I've had over 25 individual meetings with student groups themselves, not to mention other meetings with faculty representatives, the institutional leaders. That comes down to just shy of four meetings a month with student groups and student leaders. You know, I'm a little confused as to why the member is going on about not consulting with students. I mean, it's in there in black and white, and the amount of times and opportunities that I've had to sit down and discuss and engage with our students. I'm really encouraged because our students really offered some very valuable and important ideas that have helped inform my decisions and government policy as we move forward. I know that that will continue. We'll continue to discuss with them and consult with them about the changes that we'd like to implement to help strengthen our postsecondary system.

You know, again, the member opposite goes on to say things like: you should actually just talk to people, get out there and talk to people. Well, Madam Chair, I have been, and I've had several individuals from the postsecondary world tell me that they've had more interactions with me in the past four months than they did with the former minister in four years. That's coming directly from members of the postsecondary community. The member may not want to take my word for it about actually sitting down and engaging and consulting with our stakeholders, but I'd encourage the member opposite to go and talk with them directly, to take his own advice and go and speak with members of our postsecondary community and ask them if I've been around and able to consult with them and discuss our ideas with them. I think he'll be pleasantly surprised. My approach is always one, I think as you know very clearly, of collaboration and consultation. That's the approach that I've taken and applied to everything that we've been doing in Advanced Education and will continue to implement.

You know, having a look at this amendment, I encourage members to not support this amendment. Again, it seems to be another trend that we see from members opposite. They want to provide a lot of very prescriptive rules around things, how consultations should occur and when and for how long and who. They want to take a very prescriptive approach. We've seen that. They've taken that approach with our postsecondary institutions and created unnecessary red tape and added unnecessary red tape onto our postsecondary institutions. The amount of conversations that I have with our postsecondary leaders who tell me they're wasting time, quite frankly, Madam Chair, filling in unnecessary reports, submitting information to government – it's our view, of course, and I know the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction would be quite pleased to hear that it's our approach to take a step back, reduce unnecessary red tape, and free up our institutions so that they can engage in the important work that they're doing in terms of strengthening their research agenda, exploring innovative and creative solutions to problems and challenges that our society faces. That's what they should be doing. That's what they should be spending their time on, not filling out silly reports for government. Under the former government that was the trend that we saw, additional reports and other requirements imposed on our institutions.

3:30

Perhaps I'll just wrap up there, Madam Chair, but I encourage the member opposite to have a look at the bill. It's black and white. It's quite clear: again, the minister "in consultation." It's not an "if." It's not an "and." It's not a "but." It's not "if the weather permits." It's not "if I feel up to it that day." The minister must consult.

Again, I think that the amount of engagement and consultation that I've had with our student leaders, who are – you know, the member is correct. They are the most important stakeholder when we talk about advanced education. We need to ensure that we're giving them the tools and the resources and the knowledge that they need to go out into the workforce and find rewarding and high-paying careers. That's been our focus, Madam Chair. That's our objective, to ensure that we're setting them up for success as much as possible in a changing environment and a changing economy. This element of the bill will give us more ability to do that, to help ensure that we're setting them up for success.

As it relates to the amendment, though, I think it's quite clear that I won't be supporting it. I encourage my colleagues to not support the amendment as well. I'm happy to continue our discussion, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the time.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, we shall vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:32 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Ceci	Hoffman	Renaud
Dang	Irwin	Sabir
Deol		

Against the motion:

Allard	Long	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Shandro
Glubish	Nally	Toor
Gotfried	Neudorf	Turton
Guthrie	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Williams
Hunter	Panda	Yao
Issik	Pon	Yaseen
Jones	Reid	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 26
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. With this bill we actually see the elimination of a number of tax credits. This is one of the most concerning things because while we were in government, we actually heard from a lot of small and medium-sized businesses that providing these tax credit incentives was a good way of moving forward, specifically in terms of diversifying the economy. My experience on the doorsteps of Edmonton-

Ellerslie specifically but also in other parts of the province as I've helped other colleagues door-knock in other places as well: you often hear people, even people who identify as Conservatives themselves. You'll ask them, "Well, can we agree that we're too dependent on petroleum?" They say: "Of course, yes. We've been saying that for a very long time." I say to them, "Well, can we agree that we need to diversify the economy?" "Yes, of course, we definitely need to do that." I'm sure that the hon. members across the way can agree that, you know, putting all your eggs in one basket doesn't necessarily lead to very good economic planning as we continue to move forward as a province, move towards becoming more modern.

3:50

You know, some of the tax credits that were put in place by our then minister of economic development and trade were created specifically in order to create incentives to not only move us towards – for example, what our government started with was the petrochemicals diversification program, which was still connected to the petroleum industry but was making sure that we could add even more value to the product before we would sell it to other markets.

Also, we would move into newer technologies and not only new technologies but also move towards – for example, the Alberta screen-based production grant – being able to allow more flexibility. I specifically mention this one because there are actually constituents of mine that actually run Mosaic Entertainment. They're Eric and Camille. I have spoken about them in the House before, even when we were in government, because very early on Eric and Camille actually came to me from Mosaic. They asked me to take a tour of their business and not only of their business; they actually invited me on set one time of one of the movies that they were producing right here, invited me to, you know, a character home inside of Edmonton-Glenora, where they were actually filming the movie. It was a movie about – it was actually a remake of *Roxanne* but now using text messaging. I can't remember the exact name of the movie off the top of my head, but it was basically the story of *Roxanne* over again. It was great to see.

You know, what was so amazing to see was how many people were being put to work, because that production set – we're not even just talking about the actors. We're also talking about the technicians that were on set, the people that even were involved in the catering, of making sure that all the technicians and actors and everybody associated were being provided food on a daily basis, three meals a day. I'll never forget the pride on Camille and Eric's faces when they took me on a tour through that set. They felt so incredibly happy not only that they were being successful and contributing to the Alberta economy, but they were doing it in a way that they loved best because they were so dedicated to the film industry here in the province of Alberta.

I think that, at the end of the day, a lot of entrepreneurs are so invested in their business because they love what they're doing. They love what they're doing. They love to be able to contribute to the economy, so the more that we as a government – and I say that broadly, of course – can provide these tax incentives to our local entrepreneurs to help them reach their dreams, to solidify and make sure that their business continues to grow, the better. That's what these tax credits were created to do specifically for the entrepreneurs of Alberta. Now, it's a shame that this bill will actually terminate these tax credits, these incentives.

Instead, we end up getting from this government a \$4.7 billion no-jobs – and now a credit downgrade – handout to corporations, where, yes, these corporations have taken this money, but they haven't even invested it here in our province. When I'm out on the doorsteps and when I'm out in the community and I'm talking to

people and people ask me, “What’s this \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?” they’re, like: “Okay. Like, we get it, because it’s a conservative, political, ideological approach to provide this incentive, but when these corporations aren’t even investing those dollars here in the province of Alberta and taxpayers have given this money over to the corporations, how does that make any sense?”

This is what we see from this government. We see a very highly ideologically motivated government that wants to put a conservative approach, their ideological conservative approach, into place at no matter what cost. As we’ve highlighted in other bills that have been before this House, the sacrifices that are being made now are made by the most marginalized in our society.

Specifically, Bill 20, with the cutting of these tax credits: in a way, it’s almost like we’re sawing the floor out from under these entrepreneurs that were expecting these incentives in order to contribute to our economy. As has been well stated – and my Conservative colleagues on the other side of the House and to my right over here also know it very well – small businesses employ many Albertans. So why wouldn’t we – why wouldn’t we? – encourage these entrepreneurs to continue working hard to build their businesses, their dreams? That’s what this is about. This is about them building their dreams because they love it, just like Eric and Camille with Mosaic Entertainment.

Not everybody is dedicated to one particular industry. There are so many other things that Albertans love to do. They want to contribute to the Alberta economy. It doesn’t just have to be in the petroleum industry and those service industries related to the petroleum industry. You know, I know that my Conservative colleagues on the other side know it just as well as I do, that when you invest your dollars, you’re not going to put them all into one stock. You’re not going to take all of your life’s savings, your RRSP and say: “You know what? I’m going to bet it all on this one stock, and I’m just going to hope this thing roars. I’m just going to sell high, and I’m going to make a whole lot of money.” You wouldn’t do that with your own RRSP, so what makes you think that we should do it with the Alberta economy? And by that I mean: put all of your eggs in one basket.

Why aren’t we working towards truly diversifying the Alberta economy, which is what these Alberta tax credits were created to do? The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has said it so many times, gotten up in this House and spoken specifically about the number of entrepreneurs, businesses that actually took advantage of these tax credits and actually helped us move the needle on diversifying here within the province of Alberta.

4:00

Madam Chair, through you to all the members, I think that it’s imperative that we critically analyze these two approaches: the approach of providing these tax credits and making sure that we’re helping Alberta entrepreneurs continue to build their dreams and invest right here in the province of Alberta and this \$4.7 billion no-jobs – and now a credit downgrade – handout to the corporations, that Alberta taxpayer dollars are being taken out of this economy and being invested in other jurisdictions not only across Canada but across North America.

There are so many aspects to this bill that we could go on and on and on. You know, the other one, that I have to say because members from my own communities in Edmonton-Ellerslie have talked about it, specifically people with the community leagues, is what’s being done with the Alberta lottery fund. We heard really well last night from the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. She spoke very eloquently and adamantly about how monies from the Alberta lottery fund are now being moved towards general revenue and that so many of the programs and things that community

leagues do in terms of providing programming not only for young citizens but all citizens that live within the community league are now not going to be funded as well as they have been in the past, specifically those related to recreation.

These are all things that impact all the people in our society that I’ve spoken to already in terms of other bills. I think about programming that is offered to seniors. Again, I know that in the community of Knottwood, which actually used to be inside of Edmonton-Ellerslie but now has been moved over to Edmonton-Mill Woods with the last boundary change – I remember when I was first elected going over to Knottwood Community League, and they were providing yoga for stay-at-home moms and their children. You know, you may think to yourself: “Oh, well, okay. So we’re not going to provide yoga for stay-at-home moms and their children.” But, no, these are citizens of Alberta that actually need time. These stay-at-home moms need to get out and socialize with other stay-at-home moms or with other people. All this programming means so much to the people who actually access it.

A program that we may not see as very important: to a person who actually enjoys partaking in that particular piece of programming, well, it means a whole lot to them. Now we’re going to see a reduction in the amount of programming being provided to citizens because of the move of this government to take monies from the Alberta lottery fund and siphon that into general revenue.

There are so many things regarding Bill 20 where I could go on and on. My colleagues have gone on at great length about it as well, but the other one that is concerning – and, you know, even people in my constituency have brought it to my attention – is the cancelling of the city charters, a way of establishing new long-term funding between the provincial government and the municipal governments. I talked a little bit about that last night as well and about the relationship between municipalities and the provincial government. I think that with this move, with Bill 20 specifically, we’re seeing that municipalities are getting the short end of the stick. I think that it’s really important that we continue to work as effectively and as efficiently as possible with our municipalities because, at the end of the day, that’s where citizens access the most services, through their local government. I think it’s imperative that because we’re collecting these taxes from citizens, we pay specific attention to where citizens are accessing these services and in what context.

Again, Madam Chair, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak in the House today about Bill 20, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, and just highlight once again that what I find devastating about this bill is that these tax credits are going to be cut. Perhaps some members may think it a bit dramatic, but with the cancelling of these tax credits, we’re actually inhibiting entrepreneurs from making their dreams come true in this province, from making our economy that much more diverse and more rich with the contribution of people like Eric and Camille, who are so dedicated to the entertainment industry. Perhaps these people, who so lovingly call Alberta their home, not having access to these tax credits will mean that they will leave Alberta because the same tax credits or very similar tax credits are being offered in other jurisdictions. You know, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has spoken to that as well, the fact that there have been a number of companies here from the province of Alberta who see that those tax credits are being offered in other jurisdictions and decide to move their business elsewhere.

With that being said, Madam Chair, again I thank you for the opportunity, and I will leave it at that for now. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 20 in Committee of the Whole? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I think, as a whole, that this bill will make things more expensive for all Albertans, for people living in my constituency. If I could talk specifically a little bit about my constituency of Calgary-McCall, it consists of three neighbourhoods and the airport area. Most of the people living in these neighbourhoods in my constituency are on average making less than anybody else in the city, and they are spending more on shelter, basic needs, in comparison to the rest of Calgary.

For instance, in Calgary the average spent on shelter costs is 22 per cent of the income of the household, but in Taradale, in comparison, 31 per cent of my constituents there pay more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter. Similarly, the average income for individuals in Calgary is \$43,251, according to the most recent data that's available through the city of Calgary, while in Taradale it's only \$28,807, way less than the Calgary average.

4:10

In Saddle Ridge the same thing: while 22 per cent of the households in Calgary spend more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter, in Saddle Ridge it's 30 per cent. And in comparison with Calgary's average income of \$43,251, the average individual income is \$30,493 in Saddle Ridge.

In Martindale 29 per cent of the households spend more than 30 per cent on shelter, in comparison with the Calgary average of 22 per cent. And their individual income is \$29,538, in comparison to the Calgary average of \$43,251.

As you can see from these numbers, people in my constituency have lower incomes, and they spend way more on shelter. There are many of them who are first-generation immigrants. They all moved here for a better life, for a better future for their kids. This budget certainly is not good news for them. This bill certainly is not good news for them. Through this bill they will all be paying more in income taxes through that tax creep thing. Like, their incomes are already low, and when you freeze the inflation on those brackets, many Albertans, including those in my riding, will end up paying more in taxes, every single one of them. While the province is downloading many things on the city, in these neighbourhoods and across this province people will end up paying more in property taxes as well. You can only blame Mayor Nenshi so far for everything that the province is doing.

This bill is also doing things that will result in investors moving their capital away from Calgary, away from our province. Money will be lost in film and television industry investments and jobs, which also were of particular interest for many in my riding. For those who are of South Asian descent, those film and television credits were certainly of interest to them. The tech sector: that's moving out of province, heading to Toronto. Fewer companies are investing in research and development and new inventions like tech and green-tech jobs.

Money is being diverted, through this bill, away from community organizations, the CIP and CFEP funds, that were utilized by many in our communities. The Member for Calgary-North and the Member for Calgary-Falconridge would know that there were many community-based organizations who were providing services, who were running important programs, based on community initiatives grants. Like, I can count many organizations just in my own constituency who have received CIP grants and have delivered services to many in our communities, valuable services.

Then there was the CFEP grant, that was also utilized by many community associations, community organizations in my constituency and across this province. We are seeing a huge reduction – a huge reduction – in CIP and CFEP grants, that will certainly impact Albertans across this province but particularly in

my riding, which primarily consists of first-generation immigrants and people who are coming to Canada and calling Alberta home in recent years.

These were important supports they were getting from community organizations, and this budget clearly attacks those funds and is attacking our communities. In this budget money is diverted from community organizations. The lottery fund goes into general revenue, and although the government is assuring Albertans that, "Oh, it will be there," nobody wants to trust this government.

This Bill 20 is also putting projects like the green line and the west LRT in jeopardy in Calgary and Edmonton. Those were important projects for our cities and our province.

They're doing all that through this bill, which seeks to amend some 17 pieces of legislation, repeals five, adds two new. There is so much hidden in this bill, important things that will impact our communities and government.

When they were in opposition, they were always against omnibus legislation. What they used to call omnibus legislation was the kind of legislation that would have labour relations and workers' compensation together, completely related things. Here they have just lumped everything together. The only thing in common that you can find in all these pieces of legislation and all these changes proposed by this legislation is that it's taking things away from Albertans, it's off-loading things onto the municipalities, and it's off-loading things onto Albertans just to pay for their failed \$4.7 billion handout.

When we look at the impact of that policy, we didn't see investment coming to our province, and we didn't see new jobs getting created in our province. Instead, we are seeing exactly the opposite. Under this government's watch we have lost 27,000 jobs. Under this government's watch we have seen investment fleeing out of our province. And it's not fear and smear. Husky, who received \$233 million from this \$4.7 billion handout, laid off 371 Albertans, they reduced their capital plan by \$500 million, and they're investing in Wisconsin, Saskatchewan, and elsewhere in the United States. They're not investing here.

Because of this government's policies, investment is fleeing out of our province, and because of these policies, we are losing jobs every day. EnCana, who received \$55 million from the \$4.7 billion, is moving out of Canada altogether. They changed their name as well. Yesterday we heard about Halliburton, who was here for a hundred years. They also benefited from the \$4.7 billion handout. They're moving out. And it's Albertans who are losing jobs, who are losing economic opportunities.

Yesterday there was a credit downgrade. When we were in government and there was a credit downgrade, they would blame it squarely . . .

Some Hon. Members: Six.

4:20

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. You got the first one in six months. You're on track to get more than six. You will get eight at this rate. If you got the first one in the first six months, you're on track for eight.

The interesting thing, Madam Chair, is that the first one – we don't celebrate that. But the first one is clearly telling them where they are getting it wrong. If any of you bothered to read Moody's report, it's very clear in that report that the \$4.7 billion handout is the reason. It's very clearly stated there that the environmental risk that our economy is facing is a risk. But you have not done anything. Instead, you have repealed the environmental plan that Alberta had. That report is clearly saying that the execution of your fiscal policy is not realistic. It's subject to macroeconomic conditions that are not in your control. The price of oil is not in your

control. There is still time. We can look at those things and take steps so that we don't see any other credit downgrades. But you're still insisting that your policy somehow will create jobs.

There are a couple of things I want to reference which are relevant to what this government is doing here in this province. The 2019 Nobel prize for economics went to economists who – one of them was Dr. Banerjee, from India – said that reducing taxes doesn't create jobs, that it doesn't create investments. Here is a group of economists who are telling us this. They're telling us this based on research, based on evidence. And here we have this government that still insists that, no, all of these economists are wrong.

The 2018 Nobel prize went to an economist who said that aside from the environment, from a business standpoint economies have to brace for environmental risks. They have to incorporate innovations. And what we are seeing here is no action on the environment. The credits we had for innovation, for diversification: from what we are seeing in Bill 20, they are being taken away. This bill is ending the interactive digital media tax credit. This bill is ending the capital investment tax credit, the community economic development tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, the scientific research and experimental development tax credit.

All these tax credits were put in place based on evidence, based on consultation. That's what Albertans were asking for. That's what entrepreneurs were asking for. These are the types of credits, these are the kinds of policies that have been tried by other provinces, that have been tried by other nations, and they do work. They attract investment. They attract jobs. They attract entrepreneurs. But this bill is taking away all of these credits.

That's exactly what's been pointed out by Moody's report as well, that Alberta needs to focus on diversification. All these tools that were helping us to diversify: this bill is eliminating all of that. If you won't listen to us – credit grades are important to you – listen to Moody's. That's what they are saying, that Alberta needs to diversify its economy. Taking away every tool that was helping us diversify is the complete opposite of what economists are saying, what these credit-rating agencies are saying.

It's also changing film and TV tax credit grants. They have been pretty much eliminated. In our neighbouring province of B.C. they are making way more through these industries, and how they do it is that they offer those incentives. They offer those programs that will help attract TV and film production. This bill is taking that away from us.

With respect to the tech sector I think that when we were in government, we focused on creating more tech spaces across postsecondary across this province.

Postsecondary education certainly makes a difference in people's lives. It makes a difference in the lives of cities, communities, and the economy of the province. What we are seeing through this bill, no matter how much this government denies it, is that they are ending personal tuition tax credits, reducing them for personal education tax credits. They're increasing tuition fees across this province, in some cases 5, 10, 20 per cent. When we were in government, we had a freeze for four years.

In this entire province the minister is the only person who has been told by students that they want to pay more. I never heard that from any student. There are many people in my constituency who go to university. They say that even with the freeze it's expensive. Last week there were students from Calgary, medical students. When I talked to them, none of them said that they requested the minister to remove the freeze and jack up their price because they wanted to pay more for their education. Not a single student I have met so far – and I will try over the holidays to meet some more students. Honestly, even if one of them tells me that they want to

pay more for their education, I will come and report to the House with their name, address, everything. So far I haven't met a single student who wants to pay more.

Those tax credits and those grants: they were important. When I was going through university, these things were important to me, and these are important for students across this province.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're focused on Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. First of all, like I said about Bill 21, it sort of makes you wonder why the government in all of its efficiency and capacity would feel the need to craft yet another omnibus bill that shoves in everything but the kitchen sink. You know, I would ask the government members . . . [interjection] Well, the kitchen sink is in there, yeah.

But I would ask the government members, you know, because I'd be really curious to know: did everybody actually read the entire bill? I'm guessing that had they done that, it might have looked a little bit different. There are some pieces in here that will damage, big time, your communities. You might not think so now. You might think that your big mandate is so big that it can withstand anything, but I'm guessing it won't.

Anyway, I'm going to focus on one of the pieces that this government has seen fit to include in this omnibus bill. It is on page 55, and the heading is Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. Right at the bottom of page 55 it says:

Disestablishment of Fund

11(1) The Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund is disestablished.

That means it's gone. Now, this particular fund, of course, was under the environmental protection act.

4:30

It's important to know the legislation that this is changing or amending. Of course, I went and had a look at the environmental protection act, and one of the things that was quite interesting is about the fund that is contained right in the act. If you look at the act and you look at section 30(5) – I'm going to read you the header for subsection (5). It says:

The following shall be paid into the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund.

Then it lists a number of things, right? It begins with (a), and it goes all the way to (g), I believe. But here are the things that are in this particular fund:

- (a) security transferred under [another section];
- (b) money recovered by the Government in respect of the Government's carrying out work or taking emergency measures under this Act or any other enactment under the administration of the Minister;
- (c) money advanced by the Minister from the General Revenue . . .
- (d) money from a supply vote . . .

It goes on and talks about:

- (e) payments made by any person or the government of another jurisdiction for the purposes of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund . . .

It goes on:

- (g) gifts, donations . . . transfers to the . . . Fund.

It goes on and on.

But then what was really interesting, if you scroll a little further and you go to subsection (11) – part of me was thinking: this is just another attempt of the government to take funds that were once administered by other oversight bodies, or there were other oversight bodies looking at it, and they're moving it into general

revenue. So I was asking: why on earth would they take this small but important fund and just get rid of it altogether?

Well, here's subsection (11) in the environmental protection and enforcement act. Subsection (11) says:

If at any time it appears to the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance that there is money in the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Fund that is not required for the purposes of the Fund, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, with the approval of the Treasury Board, may transfer the money to the General Revenue Fund.

That's weird. Why would this fund be completely removed, "disestablished," which is an awkward word, just gotten rid of if the Finance minister and President of Treasury Board has the ability to do that anyway? Well, that's interesting.

Let's look at actually what this little fund did. It's not a particularly big fund, but there are components of this fund that are actually quite important. Components of the fund include forest fires; Flat Top Complex, which I actually didn't have time to look up; forest health; environment emergency response; intercept feeding and fencing. I don't see obvious cost savings to this particular measure, so once again I'm left asking questions, like we always do here, because we don't get answers. Why on earth would you put this in this piece of legislation, to remove the fund, to remove the work of this fund, to put it somewhere else that your ministers can deal with it without it ever seeing the light of day? Why would you do this? I really don't understand. I really wish somebody would stand up and explain not to me but to my constituents and to the other Albertans that are thinking: "What are you doing? Are you acting in the best interests of this province?" I would guess: you know, not really.

If you read the financial statements of this little fund, I think it sheds a whole lot more light on some of the activities that are captured in this piece of legislation or in this fund that falls under this act. I'm left asking: why on earth would you do this when you know – well, I would hope that you know – that any sort of activity or forward momentum or movement around climate change is essential? It's absolutely essential. But, then again, I wouldn't be surprised because when I hear the environment minister, Madam Chair, speak about climate change, it's usually followed by, "Yada, yada, yada, something climate change; we don't deny it, but the opposition doesn't like oil and gas," which is ridiculous to me. I don't get it.

It's like we have to do some loyalty test, which is ridiculous because we have always said the same thing: we are fortunate to have this resource. We need to do everything we can to get the best price for that resource, which is why our Premier at the time did everything that she could to get that pipeline done, and it's happening. [interjections] Well, I know you guys don't work well with reality. There's a lot of laughter. They're awake, which is good, I guess. They're laughing at the fact that the pipeline got done.

I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but it's my understanding that the current Premier – when he was a Member of Parliament and a minister in Ottawa, there was not a lot of movement on pipeline expansion. In fact, although the government likes to say, "You and your buddy Trudeau" – whatever; that's just silly. What happened is that that particular expansion had some problems because of the previous government. That was the Harper government, and that was the government that this current Premier was a part of. We can point fingers all we like. The fact is that it's getting done. The fact is that a lot of work was done over the last four years. Laugh all you like. You didn't magically get it done when you won your great big mandate. That's not how it works.

Let's go back to climate change.

An Hon. Member: Let's, please.

Ms Renaud: Yeah, let's.

Let's go back to climate change. I don't know if the members here understand what's going on right now. Did you know that . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, we're trying to keep some peace in this House, and there are a number of comments that are certainly walking that line. Could you please focus on the bill at hand in Committee of the Whole?

Ms Renaud: With all due respect, Madam Chair, if I could respond to that. I am referring to the piece of legislation that looks at the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Renaud: That is related to climate change, what I'm about to talk about.

The Chair: That's fine. Very relevant.

Ms Renaud: What I was trying to explain is that the development of oil and gas and expansion of the pipeline, which we believed was absolutely important to getting the best price for our resource while at the same time we addressed a climate crisis through a climate leadership plan: that's where I'm going.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Renaud: All right. What is happening right now, Madam Chair, is setting a standard or setting agreements between governments, between the private sector about what the future will look like for governments, for cities, for provinces all over the world. That's going on in Madrid right now. There is an international meeting that is going on where people are discussing this very important issue. Well, it's actually not an issue; I think it's the thing that will define our future. It began in 1992. I'm sure some of you will remember the United Nations framework convention on climate change. Now, of course, the focus was on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other things. Actually, now it's expanded. Starting in 1992, that eventually led to – you know, the acronym is COP 21, which we all know as the Paris agreement. We are now at COP 25, and that's happening in Madrid. It actually had to be moved to Madrid because there was a natural disaster, climate change related.

Anyway, these are important things. I mean, these are really important things, and I would hope that as an Albertan I can know – all party politics aside, I would expect that my government, whether I belonged to that particular party or not, would stand up and recognize the emergency that we are in right now and talk to us as Albertans about what the plan is. Yes, we want to get our resources to market, to different markets. We want the best price we can possibly have. We know that we must transition carefully because we cannot destroy our economy while we're looking to diversify and looking at an energy transition. That's the reality. That is what countries all over the world are grappling with. That's what we have to be grappling with here, but we're not because we're having discussions about whether we can wear an "I love oil and gas" shirt in the gallery, Madam Chair.

Anyway, let's talk about climate change. There are three strategies currently being discussed in Madrid right now, and those are mitigation, adaptation, and finance. Now, I think that all three of these topics, Madam Chair, were really part of the focus of the legislation and part of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act and the fund that was administered or talked about under that act, but that is gone. This piece of legislation,

which includes all kinds of things, everything from environmental protection to benefits for children, doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I don't believe it's respectful of the members of this House, in the limited amount of time that we have to debate, to actually be able to properly research, speak to our constituents, and then debate this properly and respectfully. Parts of the pieces in here are incredibly important.

4:40

If you don't believe that the environment and the protection of our environment and the reduction of greenhouse gases and the mitigation of all of the things that are coming are important enough to be in their own piece of legislation and deserve their own focused debate, then I think you're missing a point. You're missing the point that over 11,000 scientists from around the world have been very clear about telling us that if we do not act now and live within our emission budget, which we are not living up to right now, not as a country and certainly not as a province, then we will continue to feel the impacts of climate change.

You don't have to look very far: in the last – I don't know – five or seven years some of the horrific tragedies that have happened in this province. I'm not talking in terms of money, the cost to Albertans. I think that the cost of the southern Alberta flood was absolutely devastating. It was absolutely devastating to the people of southern Alberta, and it was devastating to our economy. I think I read estimates of the cost of that particular natural disaster, the flooding in southern Alberta, as high as, like, \$5 billion. I do think that that was a little too high, and I have read lower estimates. You know, we've got the fires. The Fort McMurray fire, which was absolutely horrific: the cost was over \$3 billion, yet we're still seeing the human cost today. We still see the human cost, and I'm sure the members that represent those communities can attest to that, that people are still dealing with the stress of that particular event. I think that those of us that even saw pictures of it on television or online will never forget what that looked like.

You know, Madam Chair, not that long ago – it was actually just a few weeks ago. Actually, that was another California fire. If we look to the south, there are other areas of North America that are feeling more acute impacts of climate change, California being one of them. They have a couple of different issues. Of course, they're closer to water; they're close to the ocean. They've been dealing with an incredible amount of drought, as is Alberta. But if you look at the one fire – I think it happened last year – it essentially burned down the entire city of Paradise, California, absolutely burned the city down.

The reason that I'm bringing this up is because we're incredibly fortunate – incredibly fortunate – that the Fort McMurray fire was contained the way it was by the incredible, remarkable first responders that we have that fought those fires, that safely ushered people out of that city. Then, I might add, it was important to note that those leaders told us that we needed another exit out of that city, God forbid it ever happened again. The previous government: we did make that commitment to do that because that was important.

We also got the recommendation to deal with the operation centre. Those particular people who are on the front lines understand the weaknesses in the system we have because they've been tested in the last few years. They've been absolutely tested by climate change, whether it was the southern Alberta flood or the fires in northern Alberta. They understand that there's a problem.

Madam Chair, I'd like to give a little bit more information about why I believe it was not a great addition to an already huge bill, that covered so many areas that I think it's irresponsible. One of the areas: again, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. I might add: add this piece of legislation or this particular piece

within the legislation to the fact that that particular budget, environment, has been cut drastically when now is the time that we should have been investing in it. Anyway, what that does is that it sends a signal, to me, to a lot of my constituents, that addressing climate change, climate emergency is not necessarily a priority for this government.

In early November I actually printed – and I tabled it not long after that – what was on the website of the government of Alberta, environment, just to get some information and just to get a copy of it before it was changed, if it was changed. It talks about climate change in Alberta. It's funny. I think that it's kind of interesting that when I do talk about climate change, climate emergency, you hear the levels go up, and you hear the comments, "You don't like oil and gas," or whatever the ridiculous things that people heckle.

What I would like to say is that the government of Alberta – that would be you – believes that climate change is a problem, and they actually go into great detail, Madam Chair, about the inherent risks of not addressing emissions, greenhouse gas emissions. If we do not bring these emissions down and meet our target, meet our emissions budget very, very quickly, these things will happen. This is very real. These are scientists and researchers and staff of the government of Alberta that have put this information together for us to use. Most of us are not scientists. These people are. This is based on research. This is fact. The impacts of climate change are very real.

Agriculture, one of the most important areas, absolutely important – and these are people, these are communities that will be impacted first, one of the first groups that I think will be impacted and very severely. I think that we're already seeing a lot of issues from this sector.

Climate change [will] lead to negative impacts on agriculture production (crop yields) and financial loss, livestock production and farming infrastructure, from increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events and long-term impacts of climate change.

This isn't me making it up. This comes from the government of Alberta.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services. I think that the members will be particularly interested in this area. I've heard a number of times that many of the members are outdoor enthusiasts, whether they like to fish or bird-watch or whatever it is that they like to do. I certainly like to bird-watch. I know that that sounds a bit weird. But in biodiversity and ecosystem services

climate change is expected to impact [the following] . . .

- various ecosystem services and benefits, including clean water, crop pollination and recreational opportunities.

So without action on reducing emissions, conservation, and mitigation of the impacts, we're already going to feel – we are going to see more damage.

I like to think that when scientists tell us things – and most scientists don't tend to agree with each other. It is a bit weird to hear 11,000 scientists from around the world tell us, you know, with the same voice that we have a problem. Our scientists are telling us that we need to conserve.

Anyway, the United Nations in May told us that there are 1 million species currently at risk. One million. Now, it was really awful to see individual examples of those species lost, but you have to put that into perspective. There are a million that we will see that are at risk. They'll be gone. You know, we all saw those pictures of the little burned koala bear that was injured in the bushfire and eventually died. In the reporting the scientists have said that these are essentially extinct.

The energy supply: here's a topic that you all might be interested in, that climate change will affect energy supplies by doing the following:

- disrupting energy generation and supply during extreme weather events.

I think we've seen examples of that. We saw an example of that during the Fort McMurray fire. Sadly, so many of the folks that live in the northern communities there are actively employed and engaged in the oil and gas sector, and I know that those fires not only had a huge human toll . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. Since the previous speaker, the Member for St. Albert, was talking about climate change and a climate emergency and whatnot and she talked about Fort McMurray a lot, having worked in Fort Mac, having worked in that industry for almost 30 years – and I made a living out of working in the oil and gas sector – on behalf of the good people of Calgary-Edgemont I thought that I should respond, just for that part of Bill 20.

Madam Chair, if you remember, when we sat on that side of the aisle, you were with me, and we challenged the previous government on their climate leadership action plan, which is CLAP. We said that it was all economic pain without any environmental gain. Our legacy party members at that time asked them: show us the economic impact analyses of all your major policies, including CLAP. I had a front-row seat there, asking them all those questions, and I never got any answer during those four years.

And here we go. Now the table has turned, and we are sitting on this side. They're sitting on that side. They're entitled to their opinion. But don't try to imply that we ever said that climate change is not real or anything. In fact, I raised a point of privilege, and the previous Speaker, Bob Wanner, called out the previous Premier and told her not to call me a climate change denier.

Having said that, when the member was talking about the climate emergency, she also talked about the United Nations. The people of Calgary-Edgemont elected me to represent Albertans and to look after those 200,000 unemployed Albertans in Calgary, Fort McMurray, Cold Lake, Bonnyville, Peace River, everywhere. That is our priority.

Talking about greenhouse gas targets and emission reductions, that's why my colleague the minister of environment is working on TIER, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Implementation Act, 2019, which will focus on emission reductions without taxing regular Albertans. If members opposite are really serious about bringing Albertans back to work, then support some of those policies we are bringing in.

Let's go back and talk about these energy products shipping to the markets where they're required and getting fair value for our products. That's what the Member for St. Albert mentioned. Madam Chair, as you know, I was born in rural India, and I personally experienced energy poverty. I don't know if the Member for St. Albert ever had that experience, but living in India, growing up in a village, I had seen many of our neighbours – I was fortunate. We had cooking gas, and we had intermittent power. It was not regular. There were power cuts all the time. The folks in my village, when they were trying to cook their meals by burning, you know, forest waste and plant waste – I mean, they're still doing the same thing in many villages in India and China. That's where most of the world's population is.

If we want to reduce global emissions – our contribution, Canada's contribution, is only 1.6 per cent of global emissions. When I was in opposition, I challenged the NDP: if you're so committed to greenhouse gas reduction, then let's do a study if Canada is an overall net contributor to emissions. Let's look at the

supply-and-demand situation and see: how much carbon are we emitting, and how much do we need since Canada is the second-largest country by footprint? What's the supply-and-demand situation with the carbon? Oh, then they started saying again, "Oh, he doesn't believe in climate change" and things like that.

That was in the past. They couldn't give me any convincing argument, even till today. So I went to the universities and asked academia to show me the calculation of carbon supply and demand in Canada. I'm still waiting for that information. But the fact remains that Canada only contributes 1.6 per cent of greenhouse emissions of the world. So even if you shut down hydrocarbon production and processing in Canada, we are only going to reduce that 1.6 per cent.

What's the alternative? The alternative is, as I said before, that people in India and China need clean fuels. Canada can actually produce our natural gas here and ship the LNG to countries like India and China so they can get off burning coal. That's how you reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I mean, we have a different approach. That's why we are saying that our TIER will address most of that.

Also, the member talked about all of the priorities of Bill 20 and how to help Albertans, which we are trying to do. But to do that, first we had to create the wealth. Before these socialists lecture us on how to distribute the wealth, somebody has to create the wealth. That's why we brought in all these economic policies: to grow the economy, to create jobs, and get people back to work in Alberta. I don't care what the United Nations gives me as a target, but the people of Calgary-Edgemont tell me that they're looking for jobs today in Alberta. That's our priority, to get 200,000 unemployed Albertans and many Canadians back to work before we worry too much about Paris or United Nations targets and all that.

I think members opposite should be realistic. As I said before, they were in government for four years. We can look up their record. Debt and deficit have gone up, unemployment has gone up, and the crime rate has gone up. Everything has gone up, and now today they are there holding us to account, which I really appreciate because that's their job. At least, they should be good at that. In four years in government they didn't do their job of growing the economy or creating jobs. In seven months we are trying to bend the curve and put us back on track to grow the economy and create jobs. They should be patient and they should be realistic instead of talking about the United Nations.

The Member for Calgary-McCall: his priority should be to represent people in Calgary-McCall, not in the United Nations countries and other rubbish. We heard that when they were in government. They tried that. Now people have shown them their place. At least, now be respectful; worry about the people who elected you, not about the United Nations, and support the good policies and hold us to account. We are here to listen. If you have any practical suggestions, workable suggestions, our government is open to listen but not to that rubbish. So, please, please understand why you are there, and support Bill 20, and let's go home and listen to the constituents. Then you'll realize.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Oh, my goodness. Wow. Thank you for the applause, by the way. You know, I have spoken to Bill 20 a couple of times. Just as I said before, I'm not proud to speak to this bill because I'm quite concerned about a lot of it. Before I get right into this, I do want to address the comments from the Member for Calgary-Edgemont. I'm quite concerned by such a myopic view, in

which we can only be concerned about our own riding and not about the plight of others around the world. That's quite, quite scary, narrow-minded thinking, in my opinion. I was a proud social studies teacher, and one of the things we encourage our young people to do is to be global citizens, and we encourage them to take critical perspectives on the issues that affect all of us, not just those in our local communities but in the global community. Like I said, to hear that that member is criticizing the Member for St. Albert for having a view of the global community is quite concerning. We should all be concerned by that perspective.

5:00

I can't speak too long, but I do want to just talk about a couple of things in Bill 20. I've mentioned before that this is a giant omnibus bill that we have. Within this bill are dozens and dozens of sections, each of which should, on its own, be debated. I must again get on the record to point out how harmful an approach this is, when so many diverse pieces are being lumped together and are not getting the debate which each deserves.

What are some of the consequences of Bill 20? Paying more personal income taxes through a nefarious tax grab; higher property taxes; loss of venture capital; millions lost in the film and TV industry; loss of tech sector jobs; loss of companies investing in research and development; hikes to property taxes; money being diverted from community organizations, which I'll talk about more in a minute; fewer funds for life-saving cancer research; as the hon. Member for St. Albert talked about, the loss of funding for environmental protection is quite concerning; the green line being in jeopardy, the west LRT being in jeopardy; and the list goes on. That is not even an exhaustive list of what is contained within this terrible omnibus bill.

Now, I want to chat a little bit about the loss of the funds in particular: the cancer prevention legacy fund, which I've spoken about in the House before, that does crucial work to address cancer; the access to the future fund, which, of course, deals with postsecondary education; and, as my colleague talked about, the environmental protection and enhancement fund. Of course, we've heard the members opposite say: no, these funds aren't being lost; they're just being streamlined. It is quite worrisome, because when you lose those dedicated funds, that are addressing some of the most crucial areas like cancer prevention – I bet that most people in this House have been affected by cancer in some way – the worry, which is quite a reasonable one, is that this will lead to less accountability and the ability for this government to move and shift these funds to wherever they see fit.

Now, one of the big ones – and, in fact, it's quite timely because there were folks in the gallery today who were representing some of our incredible community leagues here in Edmonton. One was Greg Lane, who was representing the McCauley Community League. McCauley is a vibrant neighbourhood within my own riding that I'm so proud to represent. McCauley includes Little Italy, parts of Chinatown, and it's a diverse, incredible neighbourhood. I live just north of McCauley, too, and I see every day the work that community volunteers do in McCauley and in all the neighbourhoods throughout Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. People like Greg, who was here today, are rightly concerned about the impact of the changes to the lottery fund.

You know, these are volunteers who do so much on already little. We ask a lot of them as community members, and they don't often get the credit that they deserve. I worry that with the loss of the funds that one of my colleagues talked about, the CFEP and the CIP grants, the strength, the health, the vibrancy of our neighbourhoods are very much at risk. I know – and I'm just going to talk a little bit about some of the specifics – the minister has assured, "Oh, you

know, funding from the lottery fund will continue to support community programs," but unfortunately the numbers are painting a much different story.

CFEP, the community facility enhancement program, for instance, is being cut by 35 per cent. I've heard from my colleagues, I've heard from folks in my riding who have already been told that they're not getting those funds. Again, these are for critical community projects. McCauley and McCauley Community League: I'm going to stick to that example. I'm so proud of that neighbourhood. It's incredible. Like I said, it runs on the strength of so many volunteers, but it also has a few challenges, right? McCauley has some of the highest rates of poverty in the province. You know, a lot of folks struggle with mental health and addiction challenges. We also have the bulk of affordable housing and a lot of social service agencies within the boundaries of McCauley. So it is quite fair for Greg Lane, the president of the community league, to come here to the Legislature and to say: "Look, these funds are absolutely critical. We have an incredible community, but we need support, and we've relied on government support for years."

I ask the members opposite to think about that. The community leagues – I know Calgary has community associations, and I know that rural communities have community groups as well – are so reliant on those funds. They can't do it alone. I ask the members opposite to think about Greg and to think about the other community leagues that will struggle and that will be very much in jeopardy without this dedicated funding.

All right. I said that I wasn't going to speak too long, but I just want to mention one other thing. My concern, in particular, is about some of the impacts on the arts community. I've spoken about this in the Legislature already, about the loss of the film credit. My riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood also has a vibrant arts scene, you know, whether it's the Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse, the Arts on the Ave organization, the Works. The list goes on. We've got a number, and I know I'm missing some. But I've heard from folks in my riding who work in the arts industry, in fact from folks who work in the film and screen industry who've said: "You know what? We're very much concerned. We saw what the NDP government was doing with diversifying the economy and moving towards a brighter future, one that focuses on the arts, one that welcomes the arts and fosters an appreciation for the arts." They spoke out about: "Look, we've seen a growing, thriving Alberta film and screen industry." Without a competitive tax credit, without rural incentives – they spoke about that as well – they're worried about the negative impact on their industry.

I wanted to get on the record just reiterating those concerns. Alberta is strong because of its diversity, and there are people who've spoken out and said that they're concerned about the fact that by not investing in the arts and, in particular, the film and screen industry, we will see that investment leave. You know, we've had so many incredible film productions shot right here in Alberta, and those are definitely in jeopardy. Again, I ask the members opposite to consider those investments as well.

All right. Again, I urge the members to think about a couple of things there, the impact on communities, whether that's community leagues, whether that's investment in the arts. I could have spoken about a whole list of other things that are inherent in Bill 20, including some of the impacts on transit funding, for example, another issue that impacts my riding significantly.

With that, I will end my comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. member . . .

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Sorry. I didn't actually quite recognize you. I will now. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Madam Chair, once again. It's my pleasure and honour to rise and speak to Bill 20. I just wanted to speak to some of the changes that the bill is proposing. You know, converting the Alberta screen-based production grant into tax credits: basically, this is a move that is not really supporting the industry. In speaking to this bill yesterday, I shared a quotation from one of the key players in this area who is working very hard in this industry and who has proven, if this industry gets reasonable support, what kinds of outcomes it can bring. I just actually shared the kind of pain and suffering, you know, the reaction coming from the industry. I just wanted to share a little bit of my experience on the other aspects that this bill would have.

5:10

The film industry, you know, is quite a growing industry and very fast paced, not only in Canada but around the world. The wise move would have been to think about that, about how the industry is growing across our borders. Like, the industry is growing big time in B.C. Especially when we are going through a tough time and people are looking for opportunities, this would actually cause, I would say, harm to our economic prosperity, and this is biggest, actually, with respect to diversifying the economy.

This sector is quite popular among our youth. I see more and more people showing their interest. Students want to study digital media in the film industry or in visualized designing. Thousands of students are already studying or preparing for study at NAIT, SAIT, or a number of the institutions in Alberta. They already will have the effect of their education being more expensive by the move being proposed, the change being proposed in this bill. Not only that, but they will be going through this very harsh, hard time, expensive education, which will also limit the potential and scope of the jobs in this industry. It will not only be a lost opportunity for these young folks; it will also be a lost opportunity for the province. We will end up losing these skilled workers, the talents that Alberta needs to build on. Those are some of the reasons.

I will probably once again speak to this bill sometime later on. There are a number of things that I have been looking at in the bill. Repealing the city charters – the reaction of mayors, the cities' concerns – deindexing the benefits and deindexing the tax brackets, the impact this bill is going to have: those are a number of the things. Due to this, I am opposing the bill. I just wanted to take the quick opportunity during this afternoon to be on the record that these are things that cannot be supported in any way. On behalf of my constituents in Edmonton-Meadows and Albertans I oppose this Bill 20 once again.

Thank you for the opportunity, Madam Chair.

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

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand up and again speak to Bill 20, Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019. I just wanted to finish some of the comments that I had left unfinished earlier, really focusing on the piece on page 55 of this legislation under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. It's the disestablishment of the fund, the environmental protection and enhancement fund, and that is at the bottom of page 55 of this bill.

I was talking a little bit earlier about why it is so important. First of all, I think it was really disrespectful to not have this on its own so we could fully debate it because this is a really important topic, but from the government's website what I started to list were some of the things that the Alberta government, whether it's researchers,

scientists, government staff – they've put together information for us, for all Albertans really, to look at.

These are the impacts of climate change that are coming. I talked a little bit last about energy supply.

Climate change could affect energy supplies by:

- disrupting energy generation and supply during extreme weather events
- increased stress on transmission infrastructure

I think we can all sort of understand what that would look like in the event of a flood or a fire.

- increasing demand on electrical generation (additional loads created by cooling requirements)

That's pretty straightforward. With temperatures rising, cooling requirements will be a reality.

- Extreme weather events.

I think we all can understand and know exactly what that looks like and how truly dangerous that is, whether it's droughts that impact not just the well-being of the incredible people that are farmers and producers in our province, but it will devastate their ability to produce, and it will devastate our economy because we are heavily reliant on them not just to feed us but to add to our economy.

- forest fires
- heavy precipitation with associated increased risk of flooding [of course]
- individual severe storms

Now forestry. Here are some warnings or some information about what will happen. This is directly related to climate change.

Warmer temperatures and reduced soil moisture create conditions for:

- continued mountain pine beetle infestation

I don't think any of us have driven through Alberta and British Columbia and not seen the enormous power of a little beetle.

- grasslands displacing existing forest ecosystems
- greater incidence of forest fires

We've discussed that.

Infrastructure is super important.

Infrastructure (such as buildings, roads, bridges, pipelines and electricity transmission) is generally sensitive to gradual changes in temperature and precipitation patterns. Extreme weather events can easily overwhelm the capacity of infrastructure.

Then there's water resources.

I could go on for longer, but I will not. I'm going to wrap up with a couple of things. It is really important. We all like to talk about the economy, which is perfect. Let's talk about it, what we can do to mitigate damages to grow the economy, to diversify, but here's a quote. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, Alberta has experienced the two most costly disasters in the country's history with the Fort McMurray wildfires estimated at \$3.58 billion and the 2013 floods at \$1.7 billion. These are realities. This is just in the last few years, Madam Chair.

I wanted to address the member opposite who had some comments. I'm just going to end on this because I'm getting the evil eye, but I wanted to address those comments because it's a common reaction, when people talk about climate emergency, to say: well, we're not that bad; we don't litter that much, and we don't produce that many emissions when you compare us to, say, China or India. Well, that's irrelevant. It doesn't matter what other countries are doing. It matters that we stick to our agreement and our carbon emission budget and that we do what we can.

I would say to the member that there are many nations – I think there are over 30 island nations – now represented at the United Nations that will be directly impacted by climate change. They hardly produce any emissions compared to Canada, compared to Alberta, yet they are directly feeling the impact of this emergency.

I think all of us can remember the stark images and reality that came out of the Bahamas, right?

On that note, Madam Chair, I will end for now. Thanks.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none. Are we ready to vote?

All right. As agreed to on November 6, there's been a request to vote in sections and blocks. We will vote from block A to block I, starting with block A. Block A includes sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 23.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 23 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:20 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:

Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir
Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9

[Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 23 of Bill 20 agreed to]

The Chair: We will proceed to the vote on block B, section 6 of Bill 20.

[The voice vote indicated that section 6 of Bill 20 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:24 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:

Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir
Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9

[Section 6 of Bill 20 agreed to]

The Chair: We will now vote on block C, section 9.

[The voice vote indicated that section 9 of Bill 20 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:28 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

5:30

Against:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
Ceci	Goehring	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir
Deol		
Totals:	For – 31	Against – 10

[Section 9 of Bill 20 agreed to]

The Chair: We will now vote on block D, which is section 10.

[The voice vote indicated that section 10 of Bill 20 was agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:33 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:

Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:

Bilous	Feehan	Loyola
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Ceci	Goehring	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir
Deol		
Totals:	For – 31	Against – 10

[Section 10 of Bill 20 agreed to]

The Chair: We will now vote on block E, which is section 13 and the remaining clauses of schedule 1.

[The voice vote indicated that section 13 and the remaining clauses of schedule 1 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:37 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:		
Allard	Hunter	Pon
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Issik	Reid
Bilous	Jones	Renaud
Ceci	Loewen	Sabir
Dang	Long	Schow
Deol	Loyola	Shandro
Feehan	McIver	Toews
Getson	Nally	Toor
Glubish	Neudorf	Turton
Goehring	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	Williams
Guthrie	Nixon, Jeremy	Yao
Hanson	Orr	Yaseen
Hoffman	Panda	

5:40

Totals:	For – 41	Against – 0
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[Section 13 and the remaining clauses of schedule 1 of Bill 20 agreed to unanimously]

The Chair: The next section we will vote on is block F, which is sections 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:41 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For:		
Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:		
Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9
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[Sections 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 of Bill 20 agreed to]

The Chair: We will now vote on block G, which is section 22 and schedule 2.

[The voice vote indicated that section 22 and schedule 2 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:45 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:		
Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:		
Bilous	Deol	Loyola
Ceci	Feehan	Renaud
Dang	Hoffman	Sabir

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 9
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[Section 22 and schedule 2 of Bill 20 agreed to]

The Chair: We will now vote on block H, which is section 25 and schedule 3.

[The voice vote indicated that section 25 and schedule 3 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:49 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:		
Allard	Long	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	McIver	Schow
Getson	Nally	Shandro
Glubish	Neudorf	Toews
Gotfried	Nicolaides	Toor
Guthrie	Nixon, Jason	Turton
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	van Dijken
Hunter	Orr	Williams
Issik	Panda	Yao
Jones	Pon	Yaseen
Loewen		

Against:
 Bilous Deol Loyola
 Ceci Feehan Renaud
 Dang Hoffman Sabir
 Totals: For – 31 Against – 9

[Section 25 and schedule 3 of Bill 20 agreed to]

The Chair: We will now vote on block I, the final one. It is sections 24 and 26.

[The voice vote indicated that sections 24 and 26 of Bill 20 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:53 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For:
 Allard Long Reid
 Armstrong-Homeniuk McIver Schow
 Getson Nally Shandro
 Glubish Neudorf Toews
 Gotfried Nicolaides Toor
 Guthrie Nixon, Jason Turton
 Hanson Nixon, Jeremy van Dijken
 Hunter Orr Williams
 Issik Panda Yao
 Jones Pon Yaseen
 Loewen

Against:
 Bilous Deol Loyola
 Ceci Feehan Renaud
 Dang Hoffman Sabir
 Totals: For – 31 Against – 9

[Sections 24 and 26 of Bill 20 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. Based on the hour – there are about three minutes left; I think everybody has worked hard, and I'm grateful for the good debate from both sides of the House – I will move that we rise and report the bill.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

Mr. McIver: Now, Madam Speaker, I would move that we adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]

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