



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 11, 2017

Day 64

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 11, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let each of us reflect or pray, each in our own way. May we find strength and courage to speak thoughtfully and expressively. May we guide ourselves with patience, understanding, and respect for each other and for the people each of our members represents.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to the entire Assembly some of the smartest and hardest working students in the entire province of Alberta, from the humble constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar the students of Forest Heights elementary school. They are joined by their teacher, Mr. Dean Jaster, along with a chaperone, Resa Chyz. If they would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Do you have a second introduction, hon. minister?

Mr. Schmidt: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the government of Alberta's hard-working Alberta Cannabis Secretariat. They are seated high in the gallery. With them are . . . [interjections] These guys are a little bit slow. It takes them a while to catch on. Seated in the gallery are Kim Capstick, the executive director of engagement and outreach; Ethan Bayne, executive director of strategy and planning. Another member of the executive team, who couldn't be here today, is Andy Ridge, who is the executive director of policy. As well, there is a whole bunch of other members of the secretariat too numerous to name. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly and our thanks for making cannabis legalization so successful.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, I have three introductions. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you Ms Nadia Houle and Tracy Bradley, who are founders of Indigenous Birth. Indigenous Birth is a not-for-profit society that

advocates for the provision of high-quality maternity care options for indigenous families residing in treaties 6, 7, and 8 and Métis nations throughout Alberta. Ms Bradley and Ms Houle are passionate advocates for increasing the breadth and availability of indigenous midwifery care. I would ask both of them to rise to receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly two constituents of mine from the wonderful community of Sherwood Park, Blaine and Donna Alexander. They are here to view our proceedings in the House, and I want to thank them for taking the time to attend today. I will ask Blaine and Donna to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Finally, Mr. Speaker, it is with so much pleasure that I rise to introduce to you and through you two individuals from the Strathcona Christmas Bureau. Deborah Mahaux is a board member and liaison with the Strathcona Food Bank, and Carol Everest is a depot manager. Carol used to work for *Hansard* and is also a professor of medieval studies specializing in medieval medicine. The Strathcona Christmas Bureau, that I will speak to you about in my member's statement, provides food and gifts to qualifying residents in Strathcona county. Deborah and Carol can also be found in the summer at the Brooks Medieval Faire teaching people about the medieval days. I would like to ask Deborah and Carol to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly three members of my family. I have previously introduced my wife of 32 years to you. She's my closest companion, and I could not do this job without her support. I have yet to introduce to you and to this Assembly my parents, Wayne and Marlyn Smith. I received my love of teaching and music from my mother, who was a music teacher and has been involved either as a teacher, a choir member, or a director for most of my life. I received my passion for politics and sports from my father. My father has run many elections and has never lost a campaign. When I ran in the last election, my father agreed to be my campaign manager on two conditions, first, that I understood that he was my campaign manager and not my father and, secondly, that if I lost, it was my fault. I'm here. All three are foundation stones in my life and help to make me a better person every day. Could Lisa, Wayne, and Marlyn please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton's Food Bank has been working with Edmonton's Sikh and Punjabi community for many years. In the last 10 years over \$400,000 and thousands of kilograms of food have been donated as a part of the birthday celebration for Guru Nanak Dev Ji. This ongoing support of the food bank and friends helps vulnerable members in our community. We have several of the members of the Sikh community from Gurdwara Mill Woods, Gurdwara Singh Sabha, the Punjabi Media

Association, and of course, a member from Edmonton's Food Bank. I'd ask that they please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Christmas Spirit

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been influenced in how I view Christmas by the time I spent in Phnom Penh, a devastated city beginning to rebuild after the fall of the Pol Pot era. I spent Christmas Day in the province of Prêy Veng, the most heavily bombed area of Cambodia during the Vietnam War. On that day I visited a hospital struggling to provide care with limited and unreliable supplies. I met many Cambodians who had lost limbs to the millions of antipersonnel mines scattered in their rice fields and ate rice that, while it had been carefully sorted, still had weevils in it with the governor of the province. The night before I had asked the Cambodians working where I was staying what they thought about Christmas. They all commented on the extravagant parties that marked Christmas for the French and American foreigners they saw. No one understood that Christmas celebrated the birth of Christ and that it was a holiday of generosity and compassion.

1:40

I am grateful that the real spirit of Christmas is alive in communities throughout Alberta, including my own. Last week the information and volunteer centre hosted a party, with dinner and gifts for families struggling this Christmas. Trinity Baptist church hosted a Blue Christmas event for people feeling alone and challenged at Christmas. Next week the Strathcona Christmas Bureau will deliver hampers to over 500 families under the leadership of the two ladies I introduced earlier. They ensure that every child gets at least one item on their wish list and a complete dinner, ready for Christmas Day.

This is a community-wide effort of generosity and empathy. It reflects what I believe is the thankfulness that many of us feel at Christmas when we are able to have enough not only for ourselves but to give to others as well. Acts of generosity and thankfulness are happening throughout our communities, in our schools and in our businesses. Others contribute overseas, be it through the Rotary or through their favourite relief and development organization.

Having celebrated Christmas both close to family and far away, with rich food and poor-quality rice, with friends and alone, I use Isaiah 9:6-7 as a reminder of the meaning of Christmas and the call to justice and righteousness.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. No?

Mr. W. Anderson: A changeup. Sorry.

Postsecondary Tuition

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's ideology needs a serious overhaul. This government knows that freezing tuition is unsustainable in our current economic situation. With the government's tuition review currently and continually being pushed to the back burner and increases in taxes in different forms, we have to wonder what will happen next.

Nothing is free. Everything comes at a cost. The cost has to be transferred to someone, but to who? Other countries are offering so-called free postsecondary education to domestic students. The thing is that these countries are using a variety of approaches to fund higher education, which is something this government is lacking. Some of them do not choose and they do choose to impose excessive taxes on their taxpayers, regardless of if you have a student in your home or not. Many of the countries are choosing to fund higher education by making use of their significant oil and gas resources. The problem is that this government isn't supporting our oil and gas industry, and with the economic situation the province is in, who has the money to pay for it? Well, someone is going to have to pay, and that cost will have to be off-loaded onto the taxpayer with an increase in taxes, whether this government calls it a tax or not.

The student will receive lower quality education. There are no regulations put on international students. Institutions may be forced to free up more international space, leaving less for Alberta students. Promises of tuition being lowered and off-loaded costs onto taxpayers create the impression that there is no cost. Studies have concluded that completion rates are lower when higher education is off-loaded. Persistence among students decreases. Institutions struggle to keep the best professors and resources by making necessary budgetary cuts. Mandatory fees increase, and this does not solve occupational shortages.

There are too many questions unanswered. While there may be a push to off-load tuition onto taxpayers, we need to think through all of the unintended consequences, which this government has not had a good track record of doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Guru Nanak Gurburab

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year the Sikh community celebrates the birth of Guru Nanak at the beginning of November. The community here in Edmonton highlights this day by collecting donations for Edmonton's Food Bank. The Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha in my riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie plays a central role in organizing this important fundraising endeavour along with the Punjabi Media Association of Alberta, other gurdwaras and organizations, and the entire Sikh community.

Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhi and the first of the 10 Sikh gurus. His birth is celebrated world-wide as Guru Nanak Gurburab. Guru Nanak has been called one of the greatest religious innovators of all time. He travelled far and wide teaching people the message of one God, who dwells in every one of His creations and constitutes the eternal truth. He set up a unique spiritual, social, and political platform based on equality, fraternal love, goodness, and virtue.

I am always encouraged when hearing about the three pillars of the Sikh faith: to constantly remember the oneness that unites us all, to work with integrity while earning an honest living, and to share that wealth with all those in the broader community.

Mr. Speaker, over the last several years I have developed a number of great friendships in the Sikh community. There are often times when I'm welcomed with wide-open arms by members of the community when I visit their events and places of worship. I feel embraced and that I am like family. I know this community very well, and I know that they are incredibly generous and dedicated to fulfilling the tenets of the Sikh faith. They are proud to call Alberta and Canada their home and often bend over backwards to help those who are in need, no matter what their background. I can attest that we all share the same values, values such as dedication to one's family, profession, and community and being compassionate to

those most marginalized. Today I stand in this House along with my colleagues to say thank you to the Sikh community. Thank you for joining us today and for the valuable work that you do in helping others in our province. It is communities like yours that make Alberta a wonderful place to call home.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Cold Lake Legion Permission to Serve Moose Milk

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a good thing when government and opposition can work together to solve problems, and I'm happy to share such an example from my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake from only a month ago. Canada's Armed Forces have played and continue to play a significant role both within and outside our national borders. It was also the valour of our troops in the First World War that helped Canada gain an international identity and procure a seat at the League of Nations. Our forces went on to secure critical victories in the Second World War and play key roles in the Korean War, peacekeeping missions, and the war on terror in Afghanistan.

At home our legions provide a place for our military veterans to gather together, educate others, and celebrate Canada's victories. One such tradition within the Royal Canadian Legion is the consumption of something called moose milk, a distinctly Canadian alcoholic drink that is served in Legion halls to celebrate military events. Shortly after Remembrance Day the AGLC shut down the Legion's ability to serve the traditional moose milk in my constituency. I should be clear, though, that the AGLC was just carrying out their job, as they should. I was able to contact the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance about this important problem that we had and have a conversation, and when I sat and visited with the Legion only a short time later, I was told that the issue had been resolved. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we honour our veterans and that we take the traditions into consideration when we make decisions. It's also important that we work together as government and opposition to find solutions. I am always proud to stand up for my constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake and to say thank you to our veterans, and I was happy to work with the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance to continue to accomplish this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Emergency Responders

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the fall session draws to a close, many of us look forward to the holiday season, when we can spend time with the people we cherish the most. As we enjoy the season, let us also think of all those individuals who sacrifice their holidays to ensure that we are kept safe. Fellow members, I am speaking about the emergency responders, who dedicate themselves to fighting for the health and lives of Albertans, the valiant individuals who brave winter weather and miss holiday dinners to ensure Albertans have access to the health care and other emergency services they need.

Let us thank the doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other health professionals who forgo their own families to help Albertans throughout the province. When we talk about Christmas gifts, there is no greater gift than to give of themselves to protect the lives of others. Let us also thank our law enforcement officers and firefighters who stick to their stations during the holidays to keep

us safe. Mr. Speaker, I have witnessed not only their integrity in providing emergency service but also their awareness of the impact these situations have on helpless family members. This is my personal thank you to those who responded immediately to the health needs of my father. This is my appreciation of their thoughtful understanding and patience for my mother and how their commitment enables my family to create more memories this holiday season.

Mr. Speaker and fellow members, I am fortunate this holiday season and, more, so thankful to live in a province and country where such commitment and dedication are woven into the fabric of our shared values. On behalf of all of my colleagues I would like to wish all responders and their loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Thank you.

Christmas

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, in the not-too-distant future we will be privileged to join our families and loved ones in my favourite celebration of the year, Christmas. In my humble opinion, it's truly the most wonderful time of the year. My fondest memories are centred around sleepless nights waiting in anticipation for Christmas morning and the wondrous gifts, food, and fun that awaited us as children. Now at this stage of my life I bask in the squeals of delight from my grandchildren as they, too, discover the wonders of this joyous season. Great memories are created, and strong, familiar bonds are forged. Maybe that's the secret of why it's enjoyed by so many, religious and nonreligious alike.

1:50

But for over 2 billion people around the world this time is not just a holiday season. No, Mr. Speaker, for Christians it is a most hallowed occasion. For Christians the season is marked as Christmas, emphasizing the reason for the season, the baby Jesus born in a stable. If anyone finds themselves offended by someone wishing them a Merry Christmas, I invite them to reflect upon a few words of the ever-perspicacious Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men . . .

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

May we all remember to be a little kinder to each other. May we remember that no matter which side of the Legislature we sit on, it is within each of us to spread Christmas cheer and warmth to those in need.

With that, Mr. Speaker, from the bottom of my heart and from my colleagues I would like to wish you, Albertans, and all of my colleagues here in the House a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Speaker: First of all, to the last member, on behalf of all of us thank you for your blessings and greetings to us all.

Speaker's Ruling Improper Inferences

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Advanced Education, I sense entirely that you were making humour in your comments with respect to the intellectual capacity of the House. I understand that that was not your intention, but it has been received as an issue where, in fact, the intelligence of all of the House as well as potentially of a family member – it's very sensitive to the families. So I would ask that all of us, because the next few days that we're together are going to be extremely sensitive, be conscious of that as we move forward and continue to be conscious of each other.

Oral Question Period

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

Federal Equalization Payment Negotiations

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, today the federal equalization program is being discussed at a meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial Finance ministers. This is an opportunity for the provincial government to fight for a fair deal for Albertans. We can all agree that Alberta should not be transferring billions of dollars to other provinces if those provinces are actively working to stop important resource projects that will help to grow Alberta's economy. To the Premier: is your government fighting for Albertans in these talks, or do you intend to just be the orange doormat for Ottawa?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, as the member opposite will recall, when the federal government first rolled out their proposal for a 50-50 split on the excise tax, as chair of the Council of the Federation I was very quick to dismiss that suggestion and to say that it was not acceptable and that there was no way that the provinces would accept that. My understanding is that now a different deal has been negotiated, one that does two things. It splits it 75-25 and also puts a cap on the overall amount that the federal government is allowed to collect so that the remainder goes to the provinces. So I think we actually did a pretty good job.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier is talking about something different. I was talking about transfer payments.

Last month this government chose to defeat common-sense motions right here that asked them to prepare for these equalization renegotiations. Equalization is what I'm talking about. We wanted them to update the Assembly on their preparations. At that time the Premier treated it as a joke. They chose to defeat this motion instead of being transparent with Albertans and helping to stand up for an issue that is very, very important to Albertans. Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: are you doing something to stand up for Albertans in the equalization negotiations?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The matter has been discussed to some degree at the Finance ministers' meeting. I don't think it has been concluded yet. The position that Alberta has taken, of course, is that what we need to do is allow for protection of provinces like Alberta when there's a tremendous amount of volatility. That's one of the things that's not addressed properly in the formula, so that is the matter that our Finance

minister is taking to Ottawa and that we are representing on behalf of all Albertans.

Mr. Nixon: It's important to Albertans that their government enter these equalization renegotiations from a position of strength. I hear about that all the time. Albertans know that they have lost \$200 billion to the federal coffers through equalization programs. It's important that this government seize the opportunity to correct existing imbalances in this program. I think that is clear. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will your government be putting forward a concrete proposal for a new formula on these negotiations? Yes or no? If the government does not play ball, will you take constitutional action through the courts to make sure that they do?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the conversations are just beginning on this matter. As the member opposite will recall, the fact of the matter is that one of the things that's actually hurt Alberta through the recent downturn was the rule that was brought into play by former Prime Minister Harper and the leader of the UCP right now, Jason Kenney. As a result of that, Alberta lost hundreds of millions of dollars from what they would have received. That being said, we're doing everything we can, as I just said, to bring about a better formula, that will allow for the volatility that we experience in Alberta, to ensure that we get the best support that we can when we need it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, actually, the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer said that Albertans gained under those changes.

Now Albertans need a provincial government that will continue to fight for them on fairness in equalization. This is one of the number one issues that all of us hear outside this House. I know that members on all sides are hearing this issue. Albertans are not satisfied with where we are at with equalization, so will the Premier stand up and actually show a concrete plan to make sure she will force the federal government to come to the negotiation table and fix this problem once and for all?

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the last time this was negotiated, there was a Conservative government in Ottawa and a Conservative government in Alberta, and it is quite true that we did lose money as a result of the tweaks to the formula made by the Conservative government in Ottawa and the Conservative government in Alberta. So we are going to work very hard on behalf of Albertans to fix those mistakes, but it's a bit of a hill to climb thanks to the Conservative government in Ottawa and the Conservative government in Alberta.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer said that Albertans gained under those changes. The Premier is now standing up and saying that the Parliamentary Budget Officer is wrong. Can she justify that explanation and be clear about how she thinks that that is true and why she thinks the Parliamentary Budget Officer is not telling the truth? What is her point?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely true that the Parliamentary Budget Officer suggested that we gained if the price of oil continued to be high, but if something happened like that it went down again, which, of course, we should have all imagined might happen because that's kind of the way it's been for

the last 50 years, if it went down, we'd hit a floor. We did not go below that floor, so we could not get additional support when that happened. That is why the member opposite should look at both sides of what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said, and that is why Albertans did not do as well as they could have, and that's why we're going to try to fix it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the point, though, is still very, very clear: Albertans want a fair deal on equalization. This government continues to dodge that point. My question is: will the Premier fight, even through the courts if we need to, to make sure that resource-based revenue is removed from the equalization formula? Yes or no?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that our government will do everything we can to advance the best case we possibly can for Albertans. I think I've said that several times now. There is no question that we will continue to do that because we know that, quite frankly, all of Canada benefits greatly from the prosperity that we have here in Alberta even now, after the recession. We need to ensure that Albertans also benefit, and we will be sure to remember that that's who we are here for.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Carbon Levy Increase

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, in three weeks' time the NDP government plans on imposing a 50 per cent hike to their job-killing carbon tax. To date the carbon tax has not moved a single voice of no to yes when it comes to much-needed pipelines. All it has done is make it more expensive to live in Alberta and to do business in Alberta. No matter how much the NDP yell about that, it is still a fact that this is costing Albertans a lot of money. Has this government done any proper analysis of the economic impact of this 50 per cent hike to the carbon tax?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I would urge the member opposite to look at the documents that were released by the government of Alberta, first, when we introduced the climate leadership plan, and then, subsequently, when we introduced the levy last year because at that time there was an economic analysis done. The economic analysis was done for the first phase of the carbon levy, and the economic analysis was done for the second phase of the carbon levy. Interestingly, we are outperforming the projections already with respect to that economic analysis. The work was done, and we know that we're on the right path.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP government did not campaign on their carbon tax. They misled Albertans on the carbon tax. It was not on any page of their platform but is now on the books as a massive tax on Albertans. When the 50 per cent carbon tax hike hits next month, transportation costs will go up for trucks and trains shipping grain, shipping livestock, and shipping crops. To the Premier: do you prefer that your hard-working producers absorb these costs or that it be passed on to Albertans in the form of their grocery bills?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, denial ain't just a river in Egypt; it is a good, solid part of the UCP caucus over there. I will

tell you that it does not help this conversation here or anywhere else in Canada when significant members of the UCP front bench continue to promote climate hoax conspiracy theories, as they did over the weekend. When will the members opposite stand up and tell Canadians that they believe climate change is real and that we should actually do something to combat it?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's the Premier that is in denial of what this is costing Albertans.

The carbon tax makes it more expensive to heat barns. The carbon tax makes it more expensive to heat other buildings that our farmers and ranchers use. The carbon tax makes it more expensive for our farmers and ranchers to transport their products. And now this government is intent on raising the carbon tax by 50 per cent. Mr. Speaker, not rhetoric, just clear facts. Has this government bothered to do an analysis on the impact of their latest increase to the carbon tax on farmers and ranchers, or are they too busy coming up with one-liners and talking points to try to avoid the facts that they're costing Albertans a tremendous amount of money?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite struggle with the facts, but I'm pretty sure I actually gave them the facts in answer to that question two questions ago.

What I will also suggest, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to facts, is that Albertans want to know whether the Finance critic for the UCP believes that climate change is a hoax or not. Will they come clean?

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you. I'll try to be facty.

Viscount Bennett Centre

Ms McPherson: Mr. Speaker, it was recently announced that Chinook Learning Services' operations at the Viscount Bennett Centre in Calgary will cease at the end of August 2018. CBE also announced plans to reduce its upgrading capacity by a quarter, or 500 students. Viscount Bennett has served as a hub for high school upgrading since the '50s, providing an essential service to adult learners. To the Minister of Education: how can your ministry justify closing the Viscount Bennett Centre when the school's enrolment has doubled since 2014?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and answer this question on behalf of the Minister of Education. You know, our government has invested much more money in teachers, smaller class sizes, and additional learning supports for students in Calgary. Despite this, we've been concerned with reports from the Calgary board of education about budget deficits, and we've also heard from parents who are concerned about changes to various other things with the Calgary board of education. Our immediate priority remains to make life better for Calgary families, and we're looking at ways to do that. I'll commit on behalf of the Minister of Education to provide more information.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. In today's economy it's an advantage for those seeking employment to possess at a minimum a high school education. However, a traditional K to 12 environment doesn't suit everyone, and many have to upgrade high school marks in adulthood. Upgrading can change lives for people who have had challenges completing school. With a reduced upgrading capacity

divided across several high schools, how will the Minister of Education ensure continuity and quality of service for all upgrading students?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's important to remind the member and all members of this House that since our government took office, we've increased the funding to the CBE by over \$63 million – that's the operating funding – we've provided them \$18 million to fully cover the cost of reducing instructional and transportation fees, we've provided them \$13 million in additional funding to classrooms as part of our classroom improvement fund, and we've invested more than \$100 million in capital investments for new and modernized schools this year. Nothing is more important to this government than to give every Albertan the opportunity to receive a high-class, high-quality education in this province, and we're continuing to work to do that for the students.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the closure of Viscount Bennett means that many teachers and staff are concerned about layoffs, and reducing the number of classes will likely mean an increase in the size of classes. This is going to make it even harder for people who want to complete their diploma. When will the Minister of Education provide a plan to ensure that increased class sizes will not mean increased barriers to success for adult learners?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, again, I would refer the member to the previous question about the increased investments that we've made in the Calgary school board since we've become government. I think I would take the opportunity to remind the member and all members of the House that cutting 20 per cent out of the Education budget would not do anybody any favours in providing opportunities for students, nor would it do anything to enhance the quality of education in Calgary or anywhere else, and I think people should remember that when choosing their government.

Thank you.

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

Mental Health Long-term Care

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Hospital Edmonton previously had a unit devoted to transition support and care for long-term psychiatric patients. The patients have now been moved to smaller community-based facilities. To the Associate Minister of Health: what information is available from the staff as to how this change is working?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that this summer two homes have been renovated, in partnership with Aspire homes, and that 10 clients have been successfully housed with supports from mental health. A third home with an additional five beds will be opening in January. Eligible patients are able to rejoin the community and have support building relationships and routines, which is beneficial for their mental health. Our government supports care in the community where appropriate for patients, and we continue to support the vital work of Alberta

Hospital Edmonton as part of our mental health system. You've heard us say it before, that as long as there is an NDP government in this province, Alberta Hospital Edmonton will remain open.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is the government doing to ensure that the staff at these facilities are able to provide adequate and appropriate supports to permit patients to integrate effectively into their new communities?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The staff with this program provide 24/7 AHS support for patients in the community, again, helping them to build those relationships and routines and helping to keep them out of hospital. We know that connecting people to the supports that they need where they live is making their lives better. That's why we're making important investments in both the mental health system and in primary care, with over \$80 million for mental health care supports this year alone. Those connections would be severed if our health care system is forced to endure the drastic billion-dollar cuts like members opposite are calling for, and people would suffer.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People with mental health issues deserve to have support as they continue to live with their issues and move toward recovery. To the same minister: what is the government doing to support ongoing care for long-term psychiatric patients?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the community of care offered at Alberta Hospital Edmonton, where health practitioners continue to find meaningful ways to engage with their patients. Just recently I had the honour of joining the hospital staff to participate in an indigenous healing ceremony. For the patients involved, this connection to cultural practices is an important way to address trauma and support long-term recovery and mental wellness. We are committed through the work of the valuing mental health implementation team and throughout our health system to make patients' lives better through whole-person care.

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

2:10 Provincial Fiscal Policies and Cash Flow

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few weeks I've heard constituents and other individuals who do business with the government say that they're getting paid slower than they used to. Others tell me that cash designated for approved projects is being pushed further into the future or being cancelled altogether. To the Finance minister or the Premier: is your government out of money, or do you have a cash-flow problem currently?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. I think the member knows full well, certainly, how things work, especially in Infrastructure. We reprofiled funds to line up with the cash flow on projects. For some of these projects it is to match federal and municipal funding and timelines. We are investing in infrastructure

in this province, and our plan is working, and it is working well. One of the things I can certainly say, having been through AAMD and C and AUMA in the last number of weeks, is that we heard from so many municipalities, and they are beyond pleased with the infrastructure dollars they got for their communities, which are making a difference.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that that was a government-wide question and not an Infrastructure question, I'd still like the answer about the cash flow, and given that the NDP has been reckless with facts, telling an exaggerated version of the UCP policy on cost control, and given that the NDP promised to balance the budget by 2023 with no details attached, again to the Finance minister: with a \$54.7 billion budget, a \$10.3 billion deficit, which is about 20 per cent of the budget, what spending reductions are you planning to introduce so that you can actually balance the budget as you said you would?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is carefully and compassionately controlling spending to balance the books by 2023. That's only one year later than Mr. Kenney, but the opposition loves to make hysterical predictions. They predicted the economy would tank. We're leading Canada in growth. They predicted jobs would vanish and never return. We're creating tens of thousands of jobs and counting. The opposition frantically tried to talk the economy down, but here are the facts: Alberta's economy is looking up.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP deserves no credit for the positive details that are out there and given that with Keystone XL and Trans Mountain, even if they're built, the royalties won't be near enough to cover the \$10.3 billion deficit this government is running and given that the government through their carbon tax, minimum wage, corporate taxes is making it harder for businesses to create more revenue for the government and given that the minister has no plan to reduce spending, again to the minister: with no plan to reduce spending and with you making it harder for businesses to increase revenue, what is your plan to balance the budget, and will it ever happen?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, most of what the hon. member said in there is actually quite far from the truth. As far as encouraging investment and our government's participation in it, when we were faced with the largest downturn in generations, we introduced our Alberta jobs plan, investing in infrastructure, supporting our public services, and supporting our businesses. In the last six months alone we have Amazon, RocketSpace, Swoop, Champion Petfoods, Pinnacle, Google, and Cavendish Farms all coming to Alberta.

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

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other day the environment minister, who is the minister with the most radical policies Alberta has ever had, denigrated the Hon. Jason Kenney for daring to criticize her ministry's policies, yet it is her ministry that is costing Albertans billions of dollars and thousands of jobs. Minister, since

75 per cent of Albertans already reject your, quote, pretty darn moderate carbon tax, will you commit to scrap it?

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the question of whether this province is going to move forward with the climate leadership plan, which secured the approval of two pipelines, is a very short yes. We are moving forward with that set of policies, and here are some of the results. Drilling activity is up sharply, 64 per cent more wells drilled this year than last year. Baytex Energy just announced an 80 per cent increase in heavy oil drilling, which might interest the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. It's in his region. Husky Energy announced this week that they will boost capital spending, ramping up Tucker thermal and Sunrise. There's more on this list, and I will be happy to share it with the House.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister might want to start saddling up her unicorn to ride off into the sunset in 2019 since she insists on maintaining the fantasy that Albertans won't even notice the 50 per cent hike to the carbon tax that is coming in just 20 days and given that the carbon tax fits with the NDP's Leap Manifesto, which Albertans totally reject, Minister, since not a single pipeline opponent has been moved from no to yes as a result of your carbon tax, why won't you abandon it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, a year ago when the Prime Minister approved two new pipelines, he explicitly said that it was on the strengths of Alberta's climate leadership plan. Any claims that Alberta's economy or oil and gas industry is suffering as a result of the climate leadership plan flies in the face of the facts. Cenovus Energy has more than doubled production this year. CNRL has also increased production. Now they're considering adding a 30,000- to 40,000-barrel-a-day expansion at Horizon. Suncor reported their best quarterly results since oil was at a hundred dollars a barrel, and now they're proposing a new oil sands project.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister is calling our industry unethical and accuses the UCP of spreading fake news, let me share some real news here. Given that according to a *Sun* article on December 7, the Alberta Advantage is Dead and Buried, and that CAPP expects the CCI will put some existing facilities at competitive risk . . . [interjections] The government members think it's funny. It is not. Minister, since your job-killing carbon tax is destroying our ethical industry and it hasn't gotten Alberta any social licence, will you apologize to Albertans and cut this carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this fall we celebrated a \$2 billion oil sands expansion project by JACOS, which means good jobs for Albertans. As we move forward through the pipeline approval process, I was very glad to learn that Trans Mountain will be proceeding in the Lower Mainland. That's a fantastic development for the tens of thousands of jobs that rely on market access, which this side of the House secured with our approval of two pipelines. Now, Mr. Kenney sat on his hands in

Ottawa for a long time and did not secure pipeline approvals. Our government got the job done.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Milk River Irrigation District Water Supply

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, certain farmers from my constituency rely on water from the Milk River to irrigate over 7,000 acres of crops. A water-sharing agreement from Montana dating back over a century ensured both sides have enough water throughout the season. In 2001 this agreement was formalized with a letter of intent between Alberta and the U.S. However, last year this government decided not to honour this agreement, leaving farmers in southern Alberta without water, jeopardizing millions of dollars of crops and farm infrastructure. To the minister: will this government honour the letter of intent between the province and Montana?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a few items in that question that perhaps require a little bit of clarification from the Department of Environment and Parks, and I will be pleased to provide that information to the member so that he may appropriately communicate with his constituents, and we can clear up any misunderstandings that may arise.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the letter of intent sets out an interbasin transfer of water in Montana to divert water from the same areas to the Milk River and given that Alberta already approved a separate interbasin transfer for water in St. Paul, diverting water from the North Saskatchewan to the Beaver River basin, and given that an interbasin transfer from the St. Mary River to the Milk River is the best-fit solution to this issue, to the minister: will you approve an interbasin transfer to avert the impending water crisis in the Milk River irrigation district?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to arrange a briefing for the hon. member and any of the municipal or other officials that would like to have some clarification on this matter. It is much, much different to be doing an interbasin transfer in a basin that is not closed as opposed to one that is, which is the South Saskatchewan. We have an agreement with Montana. We are moving forward with a number of improvements to that agreement and to supporting farmers and ranchers in southern Alberta as best we can to ensure that we have safe and adequate supplies of water to grow the economy in southern Alberta.

2:20

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that in good faith these farmers built the pivots, the irrigation system to make the desert bloom down in that area and given that this government continues to say that they're all about diversifying the economy – as you know, farming surely fits that bill – to the minister: are you willing to meet with these disenfranchised farmers to tell them to their faces whether they will have irrigation water next year or not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did have the honour of spending some time in the hon. member's constituency this summer to discuss these matters. Of course, this province invests in irrigation infrastructure and other water management techniques. I believe it's \$19 million annually in the capital plan into irrigation

infrastructure, and in fact it was this province's support of farmers in southern Alberta and our support for irrigation and associated infrastructure that secured the largest private-sector investment in southern Alberta history, which is, of course, the expansion of the Cavendish Farms facility. That is going to open up new markets for potato farmers and others.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Water Act Enforcement

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While the Minister of Environment and Parks spends her time finding new ways to make life more difficult for Albertans with the job-killing carbon tax, she is neglecting her existing ministerial responsibilities pertaining to administering and enforcing the Water Act. All too often individuals, corporations, or other government entities will conduct work in or around waterways and block the flow and natural hydrology, causing impacts like flooding a neighbour's farm upstream. Can the minister advise the House: how many Water Act enforcement actions has the department brought against individuals and corporations to date in 2017?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always refreshing to hear the Conservatives from across the way bring forward a spirited anticorporate message into this House. Be that as it may, I'm happy to follow up with the hon. member to provide him the information that he seeks. I do know that, for example, there was an audit of sand and gravel operations recently that did uncover some contraventions of the Water Act, and the department is taking all measures for redress in those areas.

Thank you.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, it's nice to see the minister has her finger on the pulse of her own ministry.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that there have been 11 enforcement actions this year and that another situation in my constituency, if not resolved, could result in the erosion of a graveyard and overland flooding of a golf course as well as many residences, can the minister advise: once an enforcement order has been issued under the Water Act, how long does an individual or a corporation have to get back into compliance, what can be the consequences, and why aren't the laws being enforced?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, enforcement orders, inspections, all of those aspects of the Water Act, have top priority on this side of the House, and that is why we have stabilized our budgets in Environment and Parks so that our operations staff, our approval staff, our inspection, our enforcement staff have the tools they need to do the job. You know what wouldn't help? A 20 per cent across-the-board cut to Environment and Parks staff. That's exactly what folks out there on the landscape who want us to protect the air, land, and water don't need from this government, and they won't get it.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the town of St. Paul has asked numerous times over the last few years for enforcement of the Water Act on an individual in my constituency

and given that Alberta Environment and Parks does not seem to follow up to ensure actions are carried out or move in a swift and timely fashion even after issuing a very strict and time-sensitive enforcement order and there appears to be no incentive for noncompliant individuals or corporations to follow the rules, will the Minister of Environment and Parks stand up for the environment and enforce the Water Act?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to take the information that the hon. member has shared with the House and endeavour to get back to him in as timely a fashion as possible. But you know what wouldn't help? Some of the private members' bills that we've seen in this House, for example, to deregulate everything. This is exactly what members have in mind when they talk about red tape reduction. It's the type of rules that protect our air, land, and water, and on this side of the House we take them seriously. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Educational Curriculum Redesign

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This eye-rolling and name-calling government has been continually disrespectful in their language about Albertans. When the government was first elected, we heard them call the hard-working people of this province embarrassing cousins. Albertans are not falling for the hyperbolic NDP attacks. This weekend the NDP's by-election candidate accused concerned parents of being melodramatic about recent changes to the curriculum. To the Premier: does your government agree with your candidate that concerned Alberta parents are just being melodramatic? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member has mischaracterized many things in that preamble, I would suggest. You know, certainly, we have the greatest respect for parents and the concerns that they have. We are not here to fight their by-election for them, and if the member wants to talk about government policy, we'd be happy to answer her questions.

Mrs. Aheer: The government may not be backing their own candidate, then, because that was a quote.

Mr. Speaker, given that parents are concerned about massive changes to the curriculum and the lack of consultation and given that parents are the primary educators of their children and bear the brunt of any changes that occur and given that as parents we care so deeply about our children and their education, why is the government so eager to dismiss our perfectly reasonable concerns about the extensive recent changes to the Alberta curriculum and name-call Alberta parents as melodramatic?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education. [interjections]
Go ahead.

Mr. Schmidt: Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our current curriculum has enabled students to achieve at a world-class level, but we recognize that some of it is over 30 years old. A modern K to 12 curriculum will empower our children with the skills that they need to realize their dreams, and we believe that it's time for a common-sense curriculum update that builds on our strengths. We're not going to let Jason Kenney's conspiracy theories ruin the work of

thousands of parents and teachers to modernize curriculum. We're focused on providing constructive answers for the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Evidently the parents are wrong, so let's try this one, then. Albertans are adamantly opposed to the carbon tax, and given that the government has shown a pattern of behaviour in dismissing the concerns raised by Albertans and the opposition and given that the Premier and her friends spend more time hurling character assassinations at our leader and caucus than governing, when did the government decide that it was acceptable to call Albertans extremist and melodramatic for simply asking questions about really bad policy?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, when I hear the word "melodrama," I think of Snidely Whiplash, you know. I just don't understand why this hon. member ... [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Please continue.

Mr. Mason: Well, that was melodramatic, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to suggest to the hon. member that we are not here to fight a by-election. Why can't her own candidate speak for himself in this by-election without needing her to do it for him? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members. How late do you suppose you're going to go tonight? Taking wagers?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Calgary Cancer Centre

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary cancer centre is a much-needed facility for people across the province who are struggling with the realities of battling cancer. Albertans deserve to have the best possible care when they are quite literally fighting for their lives. Given that Calgary families have waited years for a cancer centre to be constructed in our city, to the new Minister of Infrastructure: could you please provide Calgarians with an update on this important and much-needed project?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that excellent question. We're pretty excited about this project in Calgary. In October 2015 the Calgary cancer centre project was approved and announced, including the site selected for the facility. The contract for design/build was awarded in June 2017. On September 6, 2017, the site was partially mobilized to begin early construction. It's actually ahead of schedule, which is a wonderful thing. On October 16, 2017, full mobilization to the site occurred. I was lucky enough to attend the groundbreaking along with a number of my colleagues, which was actually fantastic.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to hear that the project is ahead of schedule. Members opposite would have you believe that all that Albertans are getting for their \$1.4 billion is a fancy box.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Malkinson: Shame indeed.

To the same minister: how will the new cancer centre lead the way in providing important clinical services?

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not a fancy box. This is an extremely sophisticated build that is going to provide stellar, state-of-the-art cancer care for Albertans. It has outpatient cancer clinics, more than a hundred patient rooms [interjections] – and I really would like to be able to say these words without heckling – more than a hundred chemotherapy chairs, double the space for clinical trials, research laboratories, 12 radiation vaults, double the capacity to treat patients with the best technology, a massive new underground parking structure so families can come and visit. It's really quite . . .

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A billion dollars goes a long way in rebuilding our infrastructure deficit. To the same minister: how many good-paying jobs are being provided to my constituents and those around Calgary because of this project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Calgary cancer project will add about 1,500 jobs to the Calgary economy over the next six years. But here's something more important than that: the legacy of collaboration from cancer patients. A quote from Will Morlidge, a Calgary cancer centre patient and family adviser:

My wife Rebecca's legacy lives on in what she wanted the new Calgary Cancer Centre to be: a place of openness and [a place of] healing [and an] environment where patients will be given every possible chance to overcome their illness, and a place that radiates hope.

[interjections] I would have hoped to have gotten that quote out without heckling from the opposition.

Air Ambulance Service in Southern Alberta

Mr. Barnes: Albertans have become accustomed to code reds, but the problem is about to get worse for southern Alberta. Fixed-wing air ambulance service in Medicine Hat will be in jeopardy on March 31. The government has been forced to extend current provider Integra Air's service agreement once, and with the extended contract about to expire and the winner of the new contract without hangar space, despite that being a clear condition of receiving the contract, Mr. Speaker, will the government admit that their plan has always been to centralize air ambulance services at the risk of southeastern Alberta lives?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're making life better for Albertans with an upgraded and modernized air ambulance system. This means newer, faster, safer aircrafts equipped with the latest technology. Can-West Charters began operation in eight of 10 base communities on September 1, 2017. AHS has extended the contracts of existing providers in Peace River and Medicine Hat until next spring. These are nonpolitical processes. Air ambulance service will continue unaffected come what may.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that AHS has confirmed that a new provider is taking over the air ambulance service in Medicine

Hat beginning April 1 and that it had, quote, managed to secure necessary hangar space at the Medicine Hat regional airport – end of quote – AHS has not provided specifics on where this hangar is. All they will say is that the contractor has guaranteed that they will have a hangar and that their word is good. Is this government's due diligence good, or is the NDP playing roulette with the lives of southern Albertans based on a handshake? Yes or no?

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, AHS and our government are working with all of the relevant parties to ensure that air ambulance services are unaffected and will continue as Albertans expect, come what may, which is different than what the members opposite are promising, with their reckless 20 per cent cuts to everything.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that transporting patients from Medicine Hat to Calgary is only half of the equation and that in cases where medical personnel are needed in southern Alberta, there is supposed to be a flight-ready airplane at the Calgary airport – however, there have been a growing number of reports that this is not always the case – and given that service is critical when the patient is too injured to make the trip to Calgary, as is often the case when it's a newborn or a small child, to the minister: in the past year how many days have there been when an airplane was not flight-ready to transport necessary medical personnel to southeastern Alberta?

Ms Payne: You know, Mr. Speaker, I think this really points to why it is so very important that our government is committed to modernizing air ambulance. The members opposite, when they were in charge, allowed the fleet to age. We are modernizing air ambulance. They threaten communities with closure and consolidation while we are working with all 10 base communities. They're trying to scare people with cheap political points, and we're ensuring that service levels remain constant.

Officers of the Legislature

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, this government has shown disdain and disrespect for Albertans by imposing a carbon tax that they didn't campaign on. Now they're showing disdain and disrespect for the independent officers of the Legislative Assembly. The Privacy Commissioner has repeatedly had her powers undermined by the government's interfering in the FOIP process, the Auditor General has been frustrated with the slow-moving process of this government, and now last week we saw the office of Elections Alberta speak out because they were not consulted on policy direction that specifically affects their office's responsibilities. The question is: is it safe to say that this government considers independent officers of the Legislature to be inconvenient figureheads?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, Albertans deserve to have elections decided on the basis of who has the best ideas and not on access to dark money. We know that the opposition is bringing this forward because of their hiding behind what Jason Kenney is not exposing in terms of his donations. We certainly work very closely with the Chief Electoral Officer and have listened to many of his recommendations and incorporated them into the changes.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that the Chief Electoral Officer has said that they didn't work very closely and, in fact, in his letter from last week stated that he was not asked for policy direction or

input on this very piece of legislation, can the minister of democratic renewal please explain why the Chief Electoral Officer was not consulted on policy direction on the very foundation of the election process or why he was not even asked for his input?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While the opposition wants to be quick to mischaracterize the CEO's letter, the CEO does note that he did provide feedback on policy proposals for Bill 32. In fact, officials from Alberta Justice met with the CEO several times in the development of Bill 32 to discuss his recommendations and how they would look in practice. We're committed to making elections fair and making democracy robust in Alberta, and we're doing exactly that.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given this government's track record on consultation or perhaps their lack of consultation and given the public discontent that we've seen from multiple independent officers of the Legislature, my question is: has it now become government policy to not consult with legislative officers, or is this just current government practice?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I just want to say that we listened very closely to what the CEO of Elections Alberta brought in, and we incorporated some of his recommendations. Others we didn't. We continue to work closely with them, but we know that, moving forward, Alberta will have a very robust democracy, making citizens have more opportunity to be involved and have easier voting. We're very proud of those changes.

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

2:40 Crime in Bonnyville-Cold Lake Constituency

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents in rural Alberta are not only tired of being broken into; they're tired of the catch-and-release practice that is being exercised right now. At the recent crime forum in my constituency, in Bonnyville-Cold Lake, residents expressed gratitude for the work of our law enforcement but frustration that the perpetrators are back on the street as quickly as they are brought in, a revolving door if you will. To the minister. Our justice system continues to fail. When can my residents be assured that the justice system is actually acting on their behalf and taking a hard stance on criminal activity within the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Of course, nothing is more important to this government than making sure that every Albertan lives in a safe community. That's why we've continued to invest in police services all across the province, and we continue to invest in hiring more Crown prosecutors as well as building a courthouse in Red Deer. You know, with respect to the member's question, of course, the integrated crime reduction unit is operating in central Alberta, and we have other initiatives with the RCMP across the province to make sure that criminals are off the street.

The Speaker: The first supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of the initiatives that the hon. member was talking about happened in central Alberta and given that when residents were asked, "What should be done to fight crime?" the overwhelming response from my constituents was to impose tougher penalties and bail restrictions and given that I'm being asked, "Why are we letting criminals back on the street to continue committing crimes?" and given the sentiment echoed by residents in central Alberta, to the minister. Our courts are still so backed up. When are my constituents...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we continue to press the federal government to appoint judges to the Court of Queen's Bench so that we can deal with the very backlog that the member references. If he's worried about why we're backed up, I think he should ask his leader, Jason Kenney, why they didn't appoint additional members to the Court of Queen's Bench. He should also ask why he decided to cut funding for ALERT, which provides valuable police operations all across the province and puts the bad guys behind bars.

The Speaker: The second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the Cold Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce and the MD of Bonnyville each had online surveys which identified that up to 63 per cent of respondents had been victims of property crime and given the e-mail that I received shows constituents think that, quote, the NDP government is turning a blind eye on this – end quote – to the minister: when will you start engaging in meaningful discussions with my residents to hear their concerns regarding rural crime so that we can work together to solve this problem in northeastern Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I met with the guests in the gallery who were here from central Alberta a week ago, and I committed to meeting with them at the earliest opportunity in the very near future. Of course, if the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake would like to organize such a meeting, I will endeavour to make that as soon as possible as well. With respect to turning our backs on communities, Jason Kenney turned his back on Albertans when he was in the federal government by cutting ALERT funding, making sure that our government had to step up and put the funding in, as well as neglecting to appoint any additional judges to the Court of Queen's Bench.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce a guest.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Dr. Liu, professor and chair of the department of occupational therapy at the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Alberta. Dr. Liu provided very helpful feedback regarding private member's Bill 210 and has worked closely with other stakeholders providing key

information around seniors, dementia, and missing persons that helped to inform the silver alert bill before the House later today. Accompanying Dr. Liu is her associate, Noelannah Neubauer. Noelannah is a PhD student in rehabilitation science at the University of Alberta. She is doing her thesis on critical wandering in persons with dementia. Would Dr. Liu and Noelannah Neubauer please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

In just 10 minutes we'll continue. [interjections] In 10 seconds. Ten minutes would be better.

An Hon. Member: Upping the bar.

The Speaker: That's right, upping the bar.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some days I could use a 10-minute break, too.

Today I have one tabling for you. It's an article from the *Edmonton Journal* entitled Proposed Law Offers Protection to Alberta Pet Owners. The article tells a story of pet owners who have been taken unawares and how the veterinary changes could avoid some of these heartbreaks. One pet owner is quoted as saying in this article, "Seniors are [particularly] vulnerable because they have these very strong ties to these animals."

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to table an enforcement order that I referenced in my question today. It was issued in August. It was totally ignored by the person in noncompliance for blocking the flow of a creek. Not only that, but the department actually waived the minimum days for him to put in an appeal. I'd just like to see it dropped.

Thanks.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two online surveys and 17 letters that I'd like to table here. The first one is from my local chamber of commerce. A couple of key points are that 63 per cent of the respondents were the victims of property crime; 84 per cent of the respondents had some security measures in place when the crime happened; the estimated losses from the crimes vary all the way from \$1 to \$100,000. It's significant.

The second one is a crime survey done by the MD of Bonnyville. What's important here is that we're seeing large numbers of victims of crime within our MDs.

I'd like to point out that I have Lois, who wrote a letter saying that she's been a victim of crime twice in the past year, in 2017.

I have Lindsay: "Our home and garage were both entered by smashing windows and kicking in doors."

I have Kimberly, who is constantly living in fear.

I have Susan, who has the assailant on video stealing from them, but it appears that that's of no value.

I have Amber: "I worry throughout the day wondering if we will be next."

I have Sandra: "In September 2017 we had our one ton dualie stolen."

I have Rita: "My house was broken into resulting in over \$3000.00 [worth of] damages."

I have Eleanor: "Two break ins in the last 2 weeks."

I have Corrine: "My hubby and I were victims around Easter of 2016 . . . I do not feel safe in this area."

I have Jerry: "We were broke into Sept. 3, 2016 . . . I felt totally violated."

I have Corrine, a different Corrine: "Someone's package stolen right off [our] porch . . . in broad daylight."

I have Robert: "I fear that the break ins are going to turn [into violence] soon."

I have Barrie: "On Halloween night thieves stole every blow up yard ornament." Now, that sounds humorous, but these things are actually very, very costly.

What Mark has to say: "I had a truck, trailer and quad stolen."

I have Rachel: "We estimated a total of approx. \$38000.00 worth of belongings taken from our home."

I have Jess: "We have been victims twice. Twice in one year."

We have Lee, the final one: "We have been a victim several times."

This is tragic, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Tabling Documents

The Speaker: Hon. members, I just want to encourage that, no question, we need to be assured that all citizens of our province have the right to pass this information along. Particularly in this window, it's a balance between hearing that and the amount of time to get legislation approved. I'd urge all of you to be conscious of that when you table so many documents at one time. I'd appreciate that.

2:50

Tabling Returns and Reports (continued)

The Speaker: The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The letters continue to roll in. I have Dolores, who suffered a home invasion at 3 o'clock in the morning, locked herself in the bathroom. It took 45 minutes for the police to arrive.

Another individual here from my riding was robbed three times. This individual's response from the RCMP on all three occasions was: "[Well, just] come to the detachment and [file] a report." There was no on-scene investigation completed.

This is a request to the minister from Karen saying that criminals were out the next day. "Now is time for [this] Minister of Justice . . . to keep these criminals off the street."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a letter from Kerry Tremblay, president of the Bowmont Seniors' Assistance Association, to the MLA for Calgary-Bow and the Minister of Seniors and Housing. This letter asks for two members to support Bill 210, and I will be quoting from it when we debate the bill this afternoon. I have the requisite copies.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a postcard that has shown up in the mailboxes of Edmonton residents trying to instill fear in them over their water

source and advocating for the sterilization of vast tracts of land in the area of the foothills known as the Bighorn from oil and gas, mining, agriculture, and forestry development, greatly damaging rural economies. This postcard was funded by the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and Love Your Headwaters, a group . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, have you got a shorter version of that?

Mr. Panda: Sure. That was funded in part by the Edmonton Community Foundation, the Calgary . . .

The Speaker: That's great. Thank you very much.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day

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

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 210

Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017.

Madam Speaker, I would like to first recognize my former legislative co-ordinator, Maureen Gough, who is in the gallery this afternoon. Without Maureen this bill would not be here before us today. She was the one who brought the idea of a silver alert bill to me when she was caring for her mother, Anne McIntosh, who had advanced dementia.

This bill also would not be possible without the assistance and the input of the following individuals: Inspector Patty McCallum of the Calgary city police; Kim Savard, program manager with CARYA, formerly Calgary family services; Dr. Lili Liu, professor and chair, department of occupational therapy, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Alberta; Dr. Sheree Kwong See, Alberta's Seniors Advocate; Raymond Swonek, president of the Alberta Seniors Communities and Housing Association; and Irene Martin-Lindsay, executive director of the Alberta Seniors Communities and Housing Association.

In addition, I would like to thank Kerry Tremblay, president of the Bowmont Seniors' Assistance Association, for sending a letter in support of this bill to the Member for Calgary-Bow. I tabled this just a little bit earlier and will be quoting from it as we move through this reading today.

Madam Speaker, all of these individuals added integral parts to this bill, and I would like to offer each and every one of them my most sincere thanks.

Bill 210 builds on work done by some of these individuals, who came together in Calgary and formed a steering committee to organize and host conversations with key stakeholders to gauge the interest and the capacity to develop a missing seniors response for the city of Calgary. Ultimately, this group is developing a framework for the community area's silver alert program, which brings together many organizations and falls now under the leadership of the Age-Friendly group from the city of Calgary. Expanding upon this fantastic work to allow all Albertans access to

this potentially life-saving alert system is something that I believe will be extremely beneficial to Albertans. It will allow for the greater ability to protect the health and well-being of Albertans who are potentially very vulnerable.

Madam Speaker, our seniors population is rapidly expanding in Alberta. In 2016 there were roughly 500,000 Albertans aged 65 and older. By 2031, as the tail end of the baby boomers reaches 65 years of age, Alberta's seniors population is projected to reach about 1 million people. This number will continue to grow, and by 2041 it is projected that 1 in 5 Albertans will be 65 or older.

A decline in cognitive functioning is associated with aging, and the risk of dementia doubles every five years after age 65. In Calgary the Alzheimer's Society estimates that more than 13,000 Albertans are living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia in that city alone, and for every person diagnosed with Alzheimer's or related dementia, 10 to 12 people are directly impacted. These would be family members, friends, and caregivers.

The Alzheimer's Association indicates that 6 out of 10 people with dementia will wander at some point. When individuals wander away from their homes and get lost or go missing, it can lead to increased risk of injury or death. The quicker we are able to locate these vulnerable individuals and return them home safely, the more likely we are to avoid a tragic accident.

Bill 210 seeks to address this problem by building on the Amber Alert system, which is already in place. Amber Alert is a voluntary, co-operative partnership between Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, participating radio and TV stations, police services, and the public.

The reasons vulnerable adults and seniors go missing generally are different than the circumstances that lead to missing children and Amber Alerts, so the approach has to be different to be effective. This silver alert system will provide a framework to enable police to send out a notice via local media when a senior citizen or another adult with cognitive impairment, a mental disorder, or a medical condition which may result in them being vulnerable goes missing. The goal is to begin the search locally unless there is evidence that the missing person is using some sort of public or private transport, which would necessitate a broader application of the broadcasts. To quote the letter of support from the Bowmont Seniors' Assistance Association, "This Bill will ensure that the relevant authorities have additional tools to employ to help locate and return individuals to safety in as efficient and effective a manner as possible."

Passing this bill puts Alberta at the forefront in Canada in terms of tabling legislation to protect our senior and vulnerable adult population. Manitoba has previously passed a silver alert bill; however, it is yet to be proclaimed. There have been many attempts in British Columbia to bring something like this online; however, all of the attempts to launch the systems have proven unsuccessful.

3:00

Several provinces, including B.C., have partnerships with an American program called project lifesaver. With this program citizens who are enrolled wear a small transmitter on their wrist or ankle that emits an individualized frequency signal. If an enrolled client goes missing, first responders will use this frequency to locate that individual. However, the downside to this program is that the cost of the program, which includes an initial fee and a recurring monthly fee, is borne by the individual, which is why I think the silver alert program is a more sound option for providing safety to vulnerable adults. This bill makes safety procedures available to all Albertans using resources that are already in place. As Bowmont Seniors' Assistance Association noted in their letter of support, this

“is a critical issue that affects almost all agencies providing social services.”

In closing, passing this bill will allow for a province-wide system to be brought online, which will allow vulnerable Albertans a far greater likelihood of being returned home safely. I believe that this is an issue that crosses political boundaries, and I encourage all members of this Assembly to support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to offer wholehearted support for Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017. As the UCP critic for seniors it is important for me to speak on this important act and applaud the work of my colleague the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for bringing this piece of proposed legislation before this House. Thank you very much, sir, for doing this work.

The heart of every Albertan clenches, as we know, Madam Speaker, when we hear an Amber Alert, but we also know how effective they are because as a community we also celebrate when the missing child is found using the collective eyes of our community and using this Amber Alert tool. We feel that all sides of this Chamber should support my colleague's bill to use the same system for seniors who have gone missing.

How many times do we hear on TV, radio, and media reports that a senior, often one prone to wandering due to dementia, particularly Alzheimer's, has disappeared? I mean, it's very common these days. It is easy to envision them alone, walking in surroundings that at one time might have been familiar but now, because of those medical conditions, are confusing. They can travel a long way, especially because many Alzheimer's patients can retain their health, Madam Speaker, into much later years, because their disease often does prompt wandering. Just as we are crushed with worry when a child goes missing, we face a similar worry when an elderly person is missing on the streets and wandering on the streets, often in the dark, in the cold, or even driving until they run out of gas in their vehicles. These are the common stories we have all come across in this part of the province and also in other parts of this country.

The simplicity of Bill 210, in my opinion, is brilliant. The Amber Alert process is already in place. It is bolstered by social media to make it even more effective. We all know that it has saved lives. We know that; we experience that whenever the Amber Alert is used and the child is found safe. Children are vulnerable, and society bonds together to take care of them when we have an Amber Alert. I think it's no different for elderly Albertans or for Albertans with special challenges. I think Albertans want to help and that amber and silver alerts empower all of us immediately.

With so many initiatives that rise to the provincial level, local communities led the way in creating these kinds of alerts. The concept has been tested at a community level out of necessity, and we know it works, Madam Speaker. With the Amber Alert program so effective provincially, all of the safeguards are already in place to ensure processes will also translate to elderly and other vulnerable Albertans. This is a common-sense bill that builds on an existing framework and expands on it. I mean, we already have the framework, and we can just expand it to benefit the people of Alberta. The sooner we approve this bill, Madam Speaker, and allow it to get off the ground, the sooner we can start saving lives in our communities and start saving the lives of our seniors.

In closing, from the bottom of my heart I want to first thank the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for his hard work and congratulate your vision in bringing this important piece of

legislation into this House. For your commitment towards this House and towards this province I thank you. You have displayed your diligence as a legislator. As we all know, Madam Speaker, this hard-working Member for Drayton Valley-Devon consulted many, many stakeholders, looked at the different initiatives in other provinces, and came up with a wonderful solution to a heartbreaking problem.

In closing, I urge all members of this House that we all support this very important bill so we can all start saving lives. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seniors built this province, and we do want to and need to support them in their retirement and every stage as they age. We know that seniors are a critical part of our communities. In fact, I found this fact interesting, Alberta seniors volunteer more than any other province across Canada. Now, while many seniors live healthy lives, some, as they age, will experience natural declines in cognitive functioning. It's for these individuals that silver alerts will help.

I am very pleased right now to be able to speak in support of this bill because I know how important it is. My father had Alzheimer's, and of course you experience some changes in behaviour. People go from being very alert and aware and having good cognitive functioning to people that need some supports. To provide a way to be able to save them from being in dire straits if need be is a good move.

Now, the Alzheimer's Society, Calgary, notes that more than 13,000 individuals are living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias and that for every person diagnosed, 10 to 12 people are directly impacted. I thought that that was a very interesting number because in my experience, again, it is true, if not more people.

Researchers, of course, have identified a number of situations where a senior may wander away and go missing – I found that an interesting list – on a normal activity, but not returning. My father loved to drive and was so independent that you never, ever told him how to get anywhere, and he never used a map. He would visit regularly from central B.C. Then one day he was hours and hours late on arriving, and here he'd gotten lost. Right then the bell went off. He didn't get lost. He was a person who couldn't, but he did. That's one when the confusion hits or starts to hit.

3:10

Exiting the home setting when the caregiver is distracted by other tasks. That is a real occasion that happens. Somebody turns their back for a few minutes, and the other person will wander away, the person with dementia. Leaving the home-care setting when upset: that can happen. People don't always agree with everything that's being done for them, to them, with them. Becoming separated from the caregiver while out in community and just exploring the exercise of autonomy, just going for a walk. You've had a full adult life. You've done what you thought was necessary and wanted to do. You have seen no reason for stopping to do that. That can be a problem at this stage in a person's life. And so on.

Most research indicates that missing-senior incidents occur as a result of an independent trip to a usual activity which goes awry somehow. It's very critical in these instances that our communities and law enforcement have the tools that they need to ensure that a missing senior is brought home safely. There are many things to consider when issuing an alert. Of particular concern is that we protect an individual's autonomy, self-determination, and privacy, but first and foremost we need to try to protect their safety.

I support this bill, and I'd urge my colleagues in the House to do the same. Thank you.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Bill 210, the silver alert act. I think it's an important piece of legislation. I will take my brief time here speaking to this bill to just speak broadly about the challenges that dementia and dementia care present for our province and, of course, most especially for the people who face dementia and their family, loved ones, and caregivers.

You know, as I talk to my constituents and Albertans around the province, I hear repeatedly about the magnitude of the gaps in dementia care in this province and the lack of knowledge and understanding about dementia and what it actually means. The hon. member speaking immediately before me talked about some of the impacts. For every 1 person who is diagnosed with dementia, it has an impact on 10 to 12 people on average, and in many cases that's even more than that.

I find it curious that this province does not have a provincial dementia strategy, something I've been pushing for for some time now, dating back to the spring, when I asked the Minister of Health about that. At that time she indicated that we would see a provincial dementia strategy coming, quote, unquote, within a couple of weeks. That was back in the spring. We saw no action on that. Again in the fall I was told that we would see a provincial dementia strategy with the funding associated with that sometime this fall. Well, we're still waiting, Madam Speaker.

A provincial dementia strategy is something that other provinces have taken on. Ontario has committed \$100 million over three years to a provincial dementia strategy, and that is in addition to \$20 million that they have allocated to respite care. Those sorts of funding commitments and an overall strategic framework are entirely missing from this province, so while we talk about Bill 210 and the importance of that, it is important that we understand the context in which we're debating this, and that is that there is no provincial dementia strategy.

The government has said in the past that more long-term care beds are coming. That's good. That is one important piece of dementia care, but it is by no means the sum total of what the provincial government ought to be doing. Yes, it's an important piece, but not every person in a long-term bed has dementia, and certainly long-term care would not be an appropriate setting for every single person with dementia, particularly true of those with early onset dementia who are in the early stages of this progressive illness. It's certainly not something that should be considered a replacement for a provincial dementia strategy.

As I think of the silver alert legislation, one of the reasons I'm so strongly in favour of it is the story of our neighbour Ken. Ken was in his early 80s and, unfortunately, had progressively worse Alzheimer's and would wander. He was still able to live at home. He's lived in the neighbourhood for almost all of his life and was born and lived in Calgary and moved to that neighbourhood when he was a small boy. Our house was his friend Graham's house, and he would come and knock on our door on a regular basis. He would wander through the neighbourhood, but those of us in the neighbourhood were able to look out for Ken and make sure that he was able to always find his way home. When I think of the importance of legislation like this, I think of Ken, and I would say: may Ken rest in peace. I had a nice opportunity to speak with Ken's wife last night at a community holiday event.

Dementia does touch all of us in this province, Madam Speaker. It's incredibly important that we support this legislation, and I do urge all of my hon. colleagues to do so.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 210, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017, put forward by my hon. colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon. I'd like to commend my colleague for putting his time and his efforts and a lot of research into this piece of legislation that we see here before us today.

I think that many Albertans, in fact I might even be so bold as to say that most Albertans would certainly agree that having the ability to issue a silver alert is an important signal in our society. Anything that we can do in this Legislature that protects vulnerable persons and aids in finding missing persons is certainly a good step forward that we can all take here together today, Madam Speaker, in second reading.

I won't say much. I won't take up much time. I do support this piece of legislation. I think it is an excellent step forward in assisting in protecting and having the backs of our vulnerable seniors in this province, where dementia and other deteriorating diseases like that are a reality and where wandering off happens. It's no one's fault, and it is what it is, but having the systems in place that can help these people find a safe way home is a good step forward.

I will certainly be voting for this piece of legislation, and I urge all members in this House to do the same. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to close debate.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to have a couple of comments here. Again, thank you to all of the people that helped put this bill together. I think we all have been touched by people that we love who have wandered off and who need assistance, and if this bill can move us forward in that direction and towards safeguarding the lives of some of our Albertan citizens, then I think it's an important bill that we should all support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 210 read a second time]

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising to seek unanimous consent that notwithstanding Standing Order 8 the Assembly will move into immediate consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill 209, the Radon Awareness and Testing Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to request the unanimous consent of this Assembly to waive Standing Order 8(7) to allow the Assembly to proceed to Committee of the Whole on Bill 210, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**3:20 Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

**Bill 209
Radon Awareness and Testing Act**

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to say again to the member: thank you so much for bringing this bill forward. The best part of the bill coming forward has been the education that we've all gotten in this House about radon. I'm very, very grateful that you've brought this to all of our attention. Thank you so much for that.

One of the things, going through just a little bit of consultation over the last week, since the bill was presented, was that we're not sure about the testing piece of it. The reason I'm bringing this up is because, as you know, there are a lot of little, tiny businesses all over Alberta that run day homes. With the legislation presently, as we know, if you have fewer than eight children in your home, there is no need to get any sort of certification to have a day home, but for any more than eight children it becomes a process of certification. This is just the legislation that presently is, how it works right now in terms of a day home.

The reason I bring this up, Madam Chair, is that one of the things that's so important to our small communities and, actually, even to the larger urban centres is the ability for people who would like to stay home and take care of children to actually be able to do that. It's a beautiful way that communities come together. They take care of each other's children. It's a wonderful way for a single person at home to be able to stay home even with their own child while taking care of other people's children. It's a wonderful homegrown business. Of course, sometimes it starts off pretty small and grows into a larger number of kids.

With respect to the larger facilities, I think one of the best things that will come out of this is that a larger facility that is going to be housing a daycare can be required – any person who's going to start a business there, within a larger facility, can request that this testing be done before they move into that facility. That can be part of their lease agreement or whatever that is going into that facility, especially, again, if there are over eight children. I think that's fantastic, not only for the daycare, but the facility will benefit from having that testing done. Obviously, if there are any concerns with radon, if they're finding any of this radioactive material, they're going to want to make sure and eradicate that as soon as possible.

We have a lot of families that live in the same dwelling. They've lived there for many years. Like I said to the member last time, you don't go to your home, your safe place, assuming that you've been breathing in anything poisonous. Again, it just was such a mind opener. I really, really, really appreciate the thoughtfulness behind this legislation.

With that, on the flip side we also want to make sure that people who are trying to start up these small businesses are not caught within a ton of regulation and red tape in order to do that. So I just wanted to bring forward an amendment if I may. I'd like to thank

the member very much for helping me with this amendment. I appreciate it very much.

Are we all good?

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. I was having a little panic moment there.

I would like to move that Bill 209, the Radon Awareness and Testing Act, be amended (a) in section 2(1) by striking out "coming into force of this Act" and substituting "coming into force of this section" and (b) by striking out section 6 and substituting the following:

Coming into force

6(1) This Act, except sections 3, 4(c) and 5, comes into force on Proclamation.

(2) Sections 3, 4(c) and 5 come into force 18 months after the date on which all remaining sections of this Act have been proclaimed in force.

Basically, what we're asking for is that there is a small exemption time for folks who have already got these spaces set up, especially small businesses. So if they're having difficulty finding the ability to be able to do this testing, the member will allow, hopefully, by accepting this amendment, small businesses the ability to have a small exemption, going forward, upon proclamation. That just gives a little bit of time for people to understand what the legislation is about, what the go-forward is with that. Like I said, we want to make sure with these small businesses that we're not putting in more red tape. Also, there are many different places within Alberta, some that have issues with radon and some that don't, depending on where these day homes and houses are built.

Also, one of the things that the member had expressed – and I agree with her completely – is the fact that we are looking at lung cancer. I mean, we can't take this lightly. It's not about putting off a decision. It's just about being thoughtful in how to process the decision and making sure that people have time to be able to absorb this legislation and be able to move forward.

I hope that everyone will be able to support this amendment. I thank the member again for this legislation and for taking a look at this amendment.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Yeah. I just wanted to thank the member for bringing forward this amendment and for working with me around her concerns, particularly around smaller day homes. I know I have a number of day homes that operate in my riding. My neighbour operates one.

One of the things that we sort of discussed in this is, really, the randomness of where radon occurs, whether it's a small day home that has, you know, eight kids in it or whether it's a larger facility, if you're inside. Radon can really accumulate anywhere inside a building, so I think it is really vital – and it's a vital piece of this legislation – to require child care facilities to test.

I absolutely agree with the member. Giving them some time to adjust, to make sure that they're aware of what the new regulations are and to educate themselves on the best ways to test and to maybe, if they need to, save up a little money, even though tests generally are very inexpensive, is all right with me.

I would hope that everyone supports this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to this amendment? Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 209? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to bring forward an amendment quickly as well. Here are the required copies of that amendment, and I'll wait till it gets passed out to speak about it.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms Luff: Okay. I did a fair amount of consultation when I was working on this piece of legislation, particularly with real estate brokers and realtors in the province. I spoke with RECA and AREA and several folks on their own, and they are absolutely aware of this issue. I've been really impressed with their willingness to work with me to make sure that we have awareness of this issue here in the province. It's something that they've really taken up thoroughly recently, but there were some concerns around sort of being overly prescriptive in some of the spots in this bill.

3:30

What this amendment does is that it strikes out clause (g), which just removes the definition of what a real estate broker is. Then section 2 is amended by striking out subsection (4), and instead of requiring the minister to provide materials directly to real estate brokers, it just allows the minister to make the materials available in a manner the minister considers appropriate. What this is is that it's just making it slightly less prescriptive.

I want to make sure that we're working with our real estate brokers, and I want to make sure that they're happy with this piece of legislation. That is what this amendment is for, and I would hope that everybody supports it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the hon. member for doing the legwork, the groundwork in the creation of this bill and being willing to work with industry in amending areas of concern. Really grateful for this.

I don't see any issues with this amendment. I think it's probably helpful given the consultation that the member had with industry stakeholders, and I think it's something that I can certainly support.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 209? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really happy to rise today in support of Bill 209, the Radon Awareness and Testing Act. Like most members of the House, I admit that I had very little idea about radon until I attended a Breathe Alberta event in the Legislative Assembly, I think, about a month ago, where this organization helped us to understand the impact of radon on health and had free kits available to all members who did show up. I'm really glad that I did show up to this event, that was held down on the first floor of this building. I did take a radon kit home with me,

and I'm in the process of discovering if my house is affected by radon gas and the potential health hazard to myself.

It really has taught me a really good lesson. It has taught me that it's really important for me as an MLA to take all opportunities around free education that are available to me when organizations do come to the Leg. and want to inform MLAs, because if I hadn't gone to that event, I wouldn't have understood the importance of the bill that my colleague has just put forth in this House. I will make sure now that I always attend those kinds of events, and I'm hoping that everyone in this Assembly does so, too.

The reason I really like this bill is that very often as private members we can put forth bills that change things a little but really make it better for all Albertans and safer. In this Assembly over the last month or so we've done a number of things to make things safer for Albertans. We introduced Bill 19, that made life safer for gas and convenience store workers, and we passed Bill 26 around the control and regulation of cannabis, which is going to ensure that when cannabis is sold, it's out of the hands of children. It's going to protect public health by limiting where it can be smoked, and it also ensures safety on our roads.

This bill from my colleague from Calgary-East is another aspect of the commitment of government and private members on this side of the House to make life safer for all Albertans. I was particularly interested in the part of the focus of this bill that was around child care. I no longer have children in child care, but our kids spend a lot of time in child care facilities. The fact that this bill does deal with providing radon testing for all child care facilities I think is another good move on the part of members of this government to make life safer for all Albertans.

I'm happy to support this bill. I'm really hoping that after this bill is passed, every single MLA in this Legislative Assembly will bother to go to the Breathe Alberta site and get a free radon kit so that we can all have our houses tested and that we will encourage places where our kids go, such as child care facilities or other facilities, to also go and get a free radon kit so that they can be tested. By the passing of this simple private member's bill, we're going to all work collectively to make life safer for not only our families but for Albertans throughout the province.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm delighted to be able to support this bill.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to stand and talk in favour of Bill 209. You know, I think it's important to realize, of course, that Health Canada has deemed radon a serious health risk, so obviously we're dealing with something that can affect each of us as Canadians, as Albertans in our homes or in our businesses or wherever we are.

Since we know that radon is cancer causing, then I think it's prudent that we have the proper educational materials for it. I know that education is so important in the health and safety of the people in Alberta, and that's why I did appreciate the amendment that was made to make the educational materials available to the public. I think that's really important. This is something that I've learned more about just because of this bill being brought forward.

It's similar to, of course, public safety with asbestos that we've learned about over the years and carbon monoxide poisoning. I do have a little bit of personal experience with carbon monoxide poisoning. It must have been about 25 years ago. This was in 1993. I went to a home to find out why some people hadn't shown up to work, and I found, actually, that three people had succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning. Also, there was one person that was

able to get out of there that survived. Of course, having that kind of experience with a situation like that makes a person a little bit more aware of situations like this.

Again, this is something that's maybe not quite as – the results aren't as fast as, you know, the situation with carbon monoxide, but these effects can affect people's lives down the road. I think that it's great that we can get the public aware of the concerns with radon poisoning so that we can work on this and make sure that we, you know, reduce the risk to Albertans.

I guess there's a 1 in 20 chance of developing lung cancer if exposed to high levels of radon over a lifetime. Of course, smoking can increase that rate, but that's a pretty horrific statistic in itself. Now, it says that in Canada 16 per cent of lung cancer deaths are attributed to radon exposure, so that's obviously very, very significant, too.

Now, of course, radon can't be seen, it can't be smelled, and it can't be tasted. It can be in your home, and you'd be completely unaware, which is very similar to carbon monoxide. Of course, the reports also say that children are at a greater risk than adults for certain types of this kind of exposure, so that's important to realize, too, how we need to protect our children. As adults we've already been exposed to this for years, but for our children, if we can reduce their exposure to it now, throughout their lifetime that prevents a lot of potential risks to health.

Of course, once the public is more educated about this, it will save lives. It will save health care costs and different things like that. But it's just so important to have this awareness, to know the risk of this. Now that the act will require radon testing to be done in child care facilities, they can have radon detector tests done, and that'll help children that are in daycares or child care facilities.

You know, Health Canada has already suggested that homeowners check to make sure that the service provider they choose to perform radon measurement services can be certified under the Canadian national radon proficiency program. It's our hope that the definition of radon measurement specialist in regulations can be held to those standards.

3:40

I think this is a good bill. We have to be always conscious of the different health concerns that Albertans can be exposed to without knowing it. Again, awareness is so important. Myself, I just had never thought of radon and had never thought of these health concerns, but now having had an opportunity to hear the discussion on this and hear the debate, I think it's a great opportunity for us to become aware and help our children, help all of us as Albertans to be aware and be able to help prevent serious health concerns that can result from radon.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 209 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 210

Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017

The Chair: Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to move an amendment to Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017. I will wait for the amendment to be distributed before I continue.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017, be amended in section 3 by striking out "July 1, 2018" and substituting the word "Proclamation."

Madam Chair, this amendment was brought to us by the government and proposed to us by them. They have requested that the act come into force on proclamation instead of the originally intended date of July 1, 2018. This is a change that I believe everyone in this House can support, including the opposition.

We understand that the date of July 1, 2018, was chosen originally because we thought that it would provide enough time for the government to be able to determine how to implement the bill and any of the associated costs that would come with it. From conversations we understand that – because the system is going to be piggybacking on the original Amber Alert system, we believed and we still believe that the cost of this should be relatively minor, but we understand the government's rationale for wanting this relatively minor change of changing this to proclamation.

We know that there are a number of steps and processes that are going to need to be followed as we bring forward this piece of legislation should it be approved by the House. Whenever the government introduces a new program or plan or policy, these steps need to be followed. So if it helps the government to move this to proclamation, then we can support that without any difficulty.

Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the minister of seniors for suggesting this change. We agree that it will make the legislation easier to implement. I'd like to thank her as well as her staff for taking the time to review this bill. We very much appreciated the chance to meet with the minister's staff to discuss this bill and to put forward our idea to the minister, and we very much appreciate the respectful and collaborative manner in which this piece of legislation was approached.

At the same time, we would like to thank the Minister of Justice. We hope that she is getting some well-deserved rest, that she's enjoying this new little one that she has, and we look forward to her coming back into this Legislature and maybe giving us the chance to see this little one for the first time. We believe and we understand that this bill actually falls under her purview, so we just want to say thank you, again, to her department. We have confidence that she and her department will be able to implement this bill in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Madam Chair, this bill is one of those times, I think, when all of the members of this Assembly can come together in a collaborative way, that we can support this amendment. In order to allow the government greater ease in implementing a silver alert system in this province of Alberta if indeed this bill passes third reading, we would recommend support of this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 210? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to take this opportunity to rise and speak in support of Bill 210, which I believe is a great initiative on behalf of the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. It looks like, thankfully, we have unanimous support thus far in the House, and I hope that everyone will take the opportunity to support this bill. When I look at the opportunity for us to do something very positive in the community in terms of protecting vulnerable individuals, I'm always very heartened by that approach and that thought.

Again, I thank the member for his initiative in moving forward in his consultation and conversations with some of the people in the continuing care communities who deal with this day in and day out where they're having to monitor individuals who are prone to wandering the community. They do their best to ensure that that does not occur, but it does occur, and when it does occur, we also have to face the fact that we live in a harsh climate. That harsh climate is not forgiving, and sometimes a matter of hours can be the difference between life and death of an individual through no fault of their own, through a disability or through dementia or other mental health issues that may cause them to wander into danger.

That could be just in an urban environment, but it could be, we often hear, in close proximity to more natural areas. I say that as the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. We have had a number of occasions in the past. I was looking up some of the news, and we have had seniors wander off into Fish Creek park. Although it's a wonderful urban environment, a natural environment in an urban setting, there are residents down there that are somewhat known to the wild, cougars and lynx and bobcats and other types of predators that could also affect these individuals, coyotes as well. In fact, my son, when he was about 13 years old, was stalked by a pack of coyotes just along the edge of Fish Creek park, and some watchful neighbours actually somewhat rescued him at the time. So vulnerable individuals can be taken advantage of on those occasions.

I was also looking up a very sad story just this past summer in Calgary, which involved not Fish Creek park specifically but a natural area around Calgary. It was the elder brother of a high school friend of mine. He was missing for three weeks before they found him in a natural area. His family was extremely diligent. They did fan out through the community. They engaged friends and local volunteers to do so. Unfortunately, he was found deceased in a wooded area not far from where houses were. I think, again: if we'd had that silver alert in place at that time, would we have been able to save that individual before his cellphone died? I was just reading that he actually had made a call or had sent a text at some point during the early part of his disappearance. Had it been taken to the authorities who had the technology to find that individual at an earlier stage, perhaps he would still be with us today.

3:50

That individual had had a brain injury a number of years prior and lacked short-term memory and had some other issues that he was addressing as well. Some of the things that go along sometimes with dementia or brain injuries can be things like depression and other issues which can cause people to also be more vulnerable when they wander off.

I'm very, very supportive of this bill. Again, I thank all members of this House for their thoughtful amendments to improve it. I think that's a positive move in this House. I think maybe we could be doing a bit more of that as time goes forward on all types of bills, where we bring all the best thoughts and research and scrutiny to legislation, that allows us to have the best legislation that we can bring out of this House, Madam Chair.

You know, when I look at some of the opportunities here for us to collaborate with the authorities but also with the media and the broadcast community, it takes me back to a situation that I found myself in back on Boxing Day 2004. I happened to be on a small island on the coast of Thailand. Of course, we experienced something that nobody ever wants to experience, which was the Indian Ocean tsunami. On that occasion many of the authorities around the world said: "Well, we knew it had happened. We knew that there was an earthquake, and we knew that it was likely to cause a tsunami. But we didn't have a system in place."

Madam Chair, there is a system in place. It's called CNN and BBC and all the media networks that we have here. There's always somebody watching that at any hour of the day, almost anywhere in the world. In fact, all they needed to do was to reach out to the traditional media. We didn't need some fancy alert system. We didn't need to spend millions of dollars on some new system, although that would have helped. In fact, somebody sitting in their hotel room who had jet lag at 2 o'clock in the morning and saw that on BBC probably would have gone down to the front desk at their hotel and told everybody to get off the beach. That did not happen – it was actually 9 in the morning – but that would have saved people. People were on the beach. People could have been warned, and people were not warned because they didn't use the systems and media that were in our hands, that were there for us.

I think that this bill says: let's use the media; let's use the traditional media who reach out with us. That silver alert allows us to work with the community. It allows us to work through social media. We have so many tools at our disposal now. We have those alert systems that we can put on Twitter. We can put it on Facebook. We can put it out through the traditional media. We can broadcast it onto radio and television and other things. We might save that one life or those numbers of lives per year. I would suggest that we will. I think that that's the positive thing that we can do with a bill like this. This is not about paper. This is not just about words. This is about what we can achieve through taking this legislation and enacting it in our communities across this province with the support of all of us in this House.

I'm very, very heartened to see this. I think that this is a very practical approach to a problem that, unfortunately, we are seeing more of. We're seeing more early onset dementia with many individuals. We also have an aging population. We will have close to 25 per cent of the population in this province that will be senior citizens within the next 14 years. Over 900,000 individuals will be seniors. Some of us in this House will be in that.

I think that this will be an opportunity for vulnerable people. It's not everybody who is going to have it, but there are going to be vulnerable people. Vulnerable people of all ages will benefit from this bill, and the opportunity for us in this House is to do the right thing through the enacting of this legislation, through empowering the authorities, empowering families to protect the members of their household, the aging members of their household or those that are specified in this bill as being more vulnerable, and engaging the broader community and our broadcast industry and those that are already doing it, as we've noted with the Amber Alert. Again, I think that if we look back on the statistics, we have saved lives with that program, and I think that there's an opportunity to do that again.

I would encourage everybody in this House to support this private member's bill. I thank those that have proposed and passed amendments thus far and thank the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for his initiative in taking his very valuable private member's bill to do this in consultation with all members of this House and members of the community and the broader community,

the seniors community, and the vulnerable communities that we're addressing. I encourage everybody to support this.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 210 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Mr. Westhead: Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills with some amendments: Bill 209 and Bill 210. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising to seek unanimous consent that notwithstanding Standing Order 8 the Assembly move into immediate third reading consideration of Bill 209, the Radon Awareness and Testing Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to request the unanimous consent of this Assembly to waive Standing Order 8(7) to allow the Assembly to proceed immediately to third reading on Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Madam Speaker, I rise to request the unanimous consent of this Assembly to waive Standing Order 77(1) to allow the Assembly to debate third reading on Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 209

Radon Awareness and Testing Act

Ms Luff: I'd like to move third reading of Bill 209, Radon Awareness and Testing Act.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-East to close debate.

Ms Luff: If no one else is going to say anything, I just want to take a minute here to thank everyone for their support for this piece of legislation. I really appreciate it. I would particularly like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who has been very enthusiastic about this particular bill. I would like to thank all of the people who I consulted with and who support this piece of legislation: AREA, the Alberta Real Estate Association; RECA; Dr. Aaron Goodarzi, without whose research I would never have, you know, found out about this whole thing; Erin Dowell, a woman in Calgary who was very concerned about this issue and with whom I had long chats on the phone; the Lung Association, Alberta and Northwest Territories; and CARST, which is the Canadian Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists, as well as Build Alberta.

4:00

The things that I really want people to take away from this piece of legislation are just that radon is a colourless, odourless gas and is the second leading cause of lung cancer in Canada; the location of radon is random, and 1 in 8 houses in Calgary have tested above the Health Canada limit of 200 becquerels per metre cubed. So it is something that is an issue here in the prairies particularly. It doesn't matter what kind of house you have. If you have a newer house, you're actually slightly more prone to radon because the seals on the house are done so well. The third thing that I want folks to remember is that children are more susceptible because they have smaller lungs and they breathe faster. That's why the child care testing piece of this piece of legislation is so important.

Just a fact that I didn't hear in any of the debate was that exposure over the recommended limit is often equivalent to taking 200 X-rays a year or smoking 40 cigarettes a day, so this really is a very serious public health issue, and it's something that people need to be aware of.

I want people to know that testing is relatively cheap, or it could be free. You can contact the Lung Association of Alberta to get a free kit if that's something that you're interested in. It should be done over the winter months, so now is actually a fantastic time to test for radon, when your doors and windows aren't open, because this is a time when you're more likely to accumulate more radon in your house. When you are doing the testing, you should put the test in a place in your home where you're spending more than four hours a day, so whether your children are sleeping in the basement or whether your family spends most of their day on the ground floor of your house, that's where the test should go.

I also want people to know that mitigation is relatively cheap. It can cost around \$2,500 to have your house mitigated, but mitigation is very effective. It works really well, and I think the cost is probably worth knowing that you're not exposing your family to a carcinogen that's likely to cause lung cancer.

I just want to urge everyone to please test, to please educate your friends and family, to please let everyone know that this is something that's important and that they should do.

I just want to thank everyone again for their support. I'm very happy to have been able to put forward this issue to educate Albertans about the dangers of radon and to hopefully prevent some cases of lung cancer in the future. Thanks to everyone.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a third time]

Bill 210

Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017.

Madam Speaker, this is one of those times when I believe that we see Albertans being well served by our government, working across partisan lines for the common good of all Albertans. I believe that the ones that are going to be most well served by the passing of this bill, should it pass, are the seniors that live in this province, so those who care for them will perhaps have some of that burden lightened just a little bit.

As I said earlier, Madam Speaker, we know that the idea for this bill was brought forward to me by my former legislative co-ordinator, Ms Maureen Gough, who at the time was caring for her elderly mother, Anne McIntosh. I can remember the conversations that we would have in my office and as we drove, where Maureen was telling me about the life that she had with her mother as she went into her later years and when she first began to realize that perhaps there was an issue in her mother's life.

Before Maureen was able to find, really, an appropriate or a secure facility for her mother, her mother, Anne, had been living with Maureen on the weekends while spending the weekdays at her sister's house. There were instances there of wandering and just the sheer panic that accompanies that realization that, you know, someone that you love so very dearly is no longer where you expected them to be and just how much of a sick feeling you've got in your stomach when you realize that your mom has gotten out in the middle of the night and could be wandering through the last of the winter days and wondering how safe she was going to be until you could find her.

Now, one of the amazing things about seniors that suffer from dementia and sometimes Alzheimer's and advanced senile dementia is that they can often be very creative. Their capacity for figuring out how to get out of a room or down the stairs or out of a locked front door and into the wider world and into the neighbourhoods around them can be quite creative, and it's amazing what they can do. I know that my mother-in-law, who suffered from the same thing – it just about killed my father-in-law trying to make sure that the person in his life that he loved the most was safe. When he was sleeping, what would happen? When he was maybe cleaning the house or cooking supper, she could just slip out quietly, and that is going to be something that is obviously very concerning for everyone that has somebody that they love that is suffering from senile dementia.

Now, the last time, I believe, that Mrs. McIntosh was out of doors, she was without any outdoor clothing, and it was 15 degrees below zero. That was a huge concern. She was eventually returned

safely, but the experience that Maureen had is multiplied many times over across the province.

You know, I was talking with a constituent, actually, a town councillor in Thorsby, and he was talking about the fact that just about a month and a half ago he was driving down a country road outside of Thorsby and saw a vehicle that was driving very slowly, fairly erratically. It eventually made its way into Thorsby, where, again, it almost had a couple of accidents, almost went off the road. He had been following it, and in the process of trying to follow this car, he had phoned the RCMP. They had suggested, "Well, just keep following him until we can get there." It took about 15, 20 minutes for the RCMP to be able to let him know: "Okay. You can break off. We're not far away. We'll find the vehicle." He got a phone call at the end of the day, and it was, again, an elderly gentleman who had left Red Deer in his vehicle and had been reported missing, but the RCMP had had no way of knowing that that was going to be the case and that this gentleman had gone all the way from Red Deer all the way up to Thorsby.

It highlighted for me why, again, we needed this piece of legislation, this silver alert. I believe it's flexible enough that should the individual go missing locally, it will be dealt with locally, but should the RCMP believe that the situation desires and needs a wider range of visibility across the province, then it's the RCMP that can step in and can call a silver alert. In this particular case, this would have been of a great deal of value to the people of Red Deer and to the family from Red Deer as it would have brought forward their father's case much more quickly to the people of Alberta.

You know, the story ended well, but it doesn't always. We know that this is a growing issue, and according to the Bowmont Seniors' Assistance Association:

Unfortunately, in 2015 in Calgary alone, almost 200 seniors were reported as missing to the Calgary Police. Many more – possibly as many as 2,000 – were believed to have wandered and their families and friends had to search for them. This problem will only grow as our seniors' population increases over the next decades.

That is the truth, Madam Speaker. As we move forward through the next 15, 20, 30 years, the population of seniors in this province is only going to continue to grow. I believe that this piece of legislation will allow us as a province the capacity to step in and to proactively address an issue before it becomes even more of an issue within our society.

4:10

You know, the fear of the potentially disastrous results that prompted my legislative co-ordinator to look into this issue took her to other jurisdictions to see what currently was being done in the province of Alberta and indeed across the country of Canada. What she found was that no province yet had legislation in place to provide a framework for attending to the safety of seniors and other adults vulnerable to critical wandering. I believe, Madam Speaker, that this bill in a reasonable way addresses this issue of wandering.

This bill certainly was developed, I believe, through the consensus of people that are currently engaged in seniors' issues, people that have in many cases significantly more input in and more understanding of the wandering issue in seniors' lives than what I personally had before we began doing stakeholder work in this area. You know, I consulted with seniors' advocates like Sheree Kwong See and her staff, and I would like to thank them for the afternoon that we spent, for the time that we spent together looking into this issue and into the insights that they brought into this complex issue around seniors and the issue of critical wandering.

Among other things from them I learned of a community-based program in Calgary that is developing a strategy to address both

prevention and education to ensure that we learn more about the needs of seniors and how to address those needs using current community resources. Sheree was so very helpful in her very gentle but strong way in addressing some of the concerns that we had and putting us into the right direction so that we could make sure that this bill addresses the needs of seniors in this province.

We contacted Kim Savard and Inspector Patty McCallum. They were part of the steering committee for that project, and we talked with Dr. Lili Liu at the University of Alberta, who is addressing the needs for research into critical wandering as part of that community initiative that is there to try and keep our seniors safe. You know, we had the chance in our conversations over the course of our stakeholder discussions to really see the common sense of people with experience. I think of Patty McCallum and Kim Savard as they gave us feedback and as we had the discussions about whether this was going to be . . . [Mr. Smith's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wish to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I'd like to speak to this bill. I think we all are familiar with the Amber Alert system, where if children are missing or the parents can't find them or whatever, they can send an Amber Alert out to notify people through the media and through various other means to help locate these children. Of course, these children could have just wandered away and may be lost, or maybe they could have gotten lost in a city or in the country, or maybe they were abducted or something more serious like that. But, obviously, when the Amber Alerts come out, I think people pay attention to that because they know that there's a child out there that could be in some serious trouble.

I think that as soon as those Amber Alerts come out through the media and everything, people immediately, especially if they're in the area where this Amber Alert comes from, start looking for children. They start noticing things, whether they're driving down the street in their vehicle or if they're at work or if they're at the park or whatever. They start noticing children. I think that's why this is so important for seniors and adults that maybe suffer from dementia or something like that, that as soon as a silver alert comes out, people will have that same kind of consciousness as far as what they'll be noticing.

I think we go through our lives a lot of times just not really paying attention to details and the different things that are happening around us, but when things like this come out, things like an Amber Alert or now possibly a silver alert, I think people will start noticing and paying attention to details. Those details could make the difference between life and death in these situations.

You know, when an Amber Alert comes out, people are looking for children, somebody a little smaller, maybe a child that doesn't have an adult with them in an unusual spot. But, of course, if we have a silver alert come out, then people will be looking for somebody bigger in size, probably older, and seeing if there is something unusual about what this person is doing. I think it's a very good idea to have this opportunity to have these silver alerts. This is truly something that could save lives. People could go missing day or night, and at night with the darkness it's harder to find people. With the weather we have in our area here, in particular in Alberta, even in the summertime the nights can be cold enough for hypothermia to set in very quickly, especially if we have any kind of rain or anything.

Of course, in the wintertime it's even more severe, where we could run into serious situations with people wandering outside without proper clothing or spending extended periods of time

outside. Hypothermia could set in, and that could be life threatening. I think it's a great opportunity to have this system so that we can take care of the people of Alberta that, like I say, suffer from dementia or anything else, any kind of cognitive problems, that may wander off and not really know what they're doing or how much trouble they could be getting themselves into. Adults and seniors: they are larger than children, so they can maybe reach a door handle easier than a small child could and get outside, or they could possibly get in a vehicle and drive because they would have that knowledge and skill set within them to do that.

I think there are several things that make this bill very important as far as helping the people of Alberta and particularly the people that have these problems that get into an area or into a situation that could be life threatening and could have serious consequences.

Now, I looked up a few things here. The B.C. Silver Alert mentions looking for vulnerable missing people: people suffering from Alzheimer's, dementia, developmental disability, cognitive disabilities, autism, Down syndrome. They are the people that they really want to be aware of, people that can get themselves into some serious trouble without being fully aware of what they're doing. The goal of the B.C. Silver Alert is to "provide a valuable public alerting system so that specific, targeted alerts can assist first responders to locate missing people who meet the criteria for urgency and vulnerability." Of course, that's the key there, to make sure that first responders have an extra tool to help people in need. These first responders can be helped by the general public with these alerts, and I think that's the key, to have even more eyes out on the landscape looking for the people that could be in some serious trouble.

I just checked out another article here, and it says that Canada's aging population and the growing prevalence of neurodegenerative diseases that cause dementia could see more seniors wander away from their homes and families. Experts say that half of those missing for more than 24 hours will suffer serious injury or death. That's a horrible statistic, that after more than 24 hours the possibility of having serious injury or death increases dramatically. Of course, actually, with the weather we have in this part of the country, we could run into problems in three or four hours, even less than that. We need to have this opportunity to respond quickly and to reduce the opportunity for people to run into serious injury or death.

It goes on to say that over half a million Canadians are currently living with dementia. Can you imagine that? Over half a million. That's a huge number of people that are suffering from dementia. That figure is expected to reach close to a million in the next 15 years, so this problem isn't going to get better over time. It's going to get worse, the numbers are going to grow, and we need to have something like this to solve these problems before they get even larger.

It says that more than 60 per cent of adults with Alzheimer's disease or dementia will wander according to researchers at the University of Alberta. Over 60 per cent of them will wander at some point and put themselves in that situation where they could risk serious injury or death.

4:20

It says that B.C. has the highest population of people older than 65 outside of the Maritimes and Quebec according to Statistics Canada. That fact, combined with the province's rugged terrain, is a rising concern among search and rescue officials. Of course, we have some of that same rugged terrain. We have the Rocky Mountains to the west in Alberta, and we have extensive forests in the north. You know, after slipping away in those areas, it would be very hard to find people and to recover them.

I just wanted to go on to another article here. Now, the United States has the silver alert, too. It says that silver alerts use a wide array of media outlets such as commercial radio stations, television stations, and cable television to broadcast information about missing persons. In some states silver alerts can use variable-message signs on roadways to alert motorists. We have these same kinds of signs on the highways in Alberta, where they could put out these silver alerts, too, and give an opportunity to travelling motorists, who maybe don't have the radio on or are listening to satellite radio or whatever, to actually be alerted to a situation.

Again – and this is relating to the U.S. silver alerts – it goes on to say that in cases in which a missing person is believed to be on foot, silver alerts have used reverse 911 or other emergency notification systems to notify nearby residents of the neighbourhood surrounding the missing person's last known location. Silver alerts can also be used for children who are missing without being in danger of being abducted. So they've actually used this for children, too, which, of course, we have the Amber Alert for.

It goes on to say that supporters of silver alerts point to the U.S.A.'s growing elderly population as a reason to support new programs to locate missing seniors. They go on with the same statistics as we have here, that 6 out of 10 dementia victims will wander at least once. Of course, that's a staggering statistic when you think that we have half a million people suffering from dementia in Alberta. If you think that 60 per cent of them will wander at one time or another, that's a staggering number of people. If we don't have every opportunity we can to find these people as quickly as possible, of course, we risk, you know, serious injury or death with these people out there on the landscape.

I just want to carry on here. We have a lot of, you know, good opportunity here. I think this is a good bill that has, really, a good premise as far as being able to help Albertans, save lives, and make the recovery of these people, to bring them back home, faster. This bill is patterned on the Amber Alert, and it amends the Missing Persons Act to create a silver alert. This would be issued when a represented adult or an adult with a cognitive impairment or who is otherwise vulnerable due to mental or physical health concerns goes missing. This bill also makes provisions for police to work with local broadcasters to alert the public if an adult with a cognitive impairment or who is otherwise vulnerable has gone missing.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am truly honoured to speak on this bill. I know that my colleague has worked very hard at promoting the safety of seniors within Alberta, and I know that his time as the shadow minister for Seniors and Housing gave him an opportunity to really look at this file and really show that dedication to make sure that our seniors across Alberta are handled in a respectful way.

Now, when it comes to the treatment of our seniors in our dementia care units, this is something that I personally and that I know a lot of my colleagues, both across the aisle and within the opposition, see is important. I myself make sure, whenever there is a concern brought forward by a family member about dementia care, that I take it very seriously, and I contact the unit that is taking care of that senior. I know that we all end up in seniors' facilities at one point in our life.

Now, I know that, for myself, I visit every seniors' facility within my constituency on or the next day after Mother's Day. It's important, you know. I take my wife and my two children, and I'll tell you that when we go and we meet with these seniors and we actually give them a rose, it brightens their day. It shows them that

there are caring people out there. Specifically with the dementia patients, going to this bill, you can feel the love from those individuals, and this is good. I had one of the dementia patients at one of my facilities who hugged my oldest daughter and didn't want to let go. You know what? My oldest daughter stood there for about five minutes hugging that elderly woman. It warmed my heart that my daughter could bring comfort to that woman.

Now, what happens is that these individuals don't have, a lot of times, the ability to defend themselves. This is why it's so important that, should they go out and find themselves alone outside of facilities or outside of family members' care, we have an ability to be able to notify people that we have somebody missing.

Now, I've got an older article, but it's very relevant to a lot of the points that I'm going to be trying to make. The article's name is 5 Tips for Tracking Missing Persons with Dementia. This is by CBC News in B.C. This was December 11, 2013, when this article was posted. Remarkably, that's four years from today. Unfortunately, this is a sad story. This is a very sad story. What we've got is a 76-year-old woman in a north Vancouver park that wandered away from her facility. What happened here is that somehow she had left the facility without her electronic tracking bracelet. She went missing on a Friday, and the family, friends, firefighters, police, and volunteers all joined in the search, a huge operation, to try to find this woman. Now, despite all these efforts she passed from hypothermia. She was found two days later. The family of this senior say that the searchers did all their best, but there is always going to be the lingering question: could they have found her sooner? Could they have found her sooner?

Now, we do have a research expert in this article. His name is Robert Koester. I apologize to the gentleman if I didn't get his last name correct. In this article it goes on to say that "in a database that he keeps, he's found that 22 per cent of cases of missing persons with dementia end with the patient found dead." This is stunning. It's a rate that is far too high, and I understand that my colleague sees from this fact that when our seniors wander away from a facility or from family members, there is a distinct possibility that that senior's life is at incredible risk.

Now, they go on and say that there are things that we can do to help find these seniors, and that's where special training comes in. What happens is that by creating a silver alert, we will have professionals ready to go that specifically will know how to find people with dementia. This is why this is so important.

Now, they've got five points in the article, and it's important to list them out, not only for trying to describe how hard it is to find these seniors but also to bring recognition that there are ways of tracking these seniors. But you know what? I didn't know them until I read this article. I'm sure a professional out there understands that these ways of finding our seniors are imperatives to get into the volunteers' hands.

4:30

Now, the first one is:

They'll go until they get stuck.

That's number one.

He said persons with severe cases of dementia will head out an exit door, keep going until [there's] a barrier or a bend in the road [that] redirects them and, if not found soon enough, they will eventually head off into the bush or into a water feature, where they get stuck, and stay.

I would have never thought to walk straight out the exit door to find a senior that had wandered off, but this is where the training would come in.

Water can be a draw.

Finding the nearest water source can be a draw for seniors. Now, I like the quote that Mr. Koester – and I apologize again if I didn't get his name right – put here. He's got a very clear quote on this one.

I don't even know if they perceive water for what it is.

So what we've got here is that water is a natural – it's something that attracts the seniors. I understand that. Water is beautiful.

Number three:

Searchers may be ignored, or avoided.

Now, in this he quotes:

They tend not to respond to searchers' shouts . . . They're living so much in the [past], they can watch a search team walk right by them.

It's important to know that screaming their name probably isn't enough.

Number four:

Look to the past.

More moderate cases of dementia will see the patient trying to find their way around a neighbourhood, thinking they are [still] in a different location from their past, and seeking . . . familiar-looking features.

This is important. This is why you need to contact the immediate family as soon as you can, saying: what is familiar to the senior?

The last one, number five:

Each case is unique, but [they're] always the same.

This is interesting. In the quote he says:

If you've met one dementia subject, you've met one dementia subject.

And it goes on to say:

But while there is no general pattern of behaviour that catches all cases, the inability to form short-term memories does guide a wanderer's path.

So what we can do is to make sure our seniors are taken care of. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak at third reading of Bill 210. There are a couple of things I wanted to note. I guess the first is just the tone of the House this afternoon and how refreshing it is that we've been able to move through two very important pieces of legislation and show Albertans that it is, in fact, possible for those of us in this Assembly, on both sides, to work together when it is to the benefit of the people of Alberta. And I would really hope – perhaps not expect but hope – that this could be an example of how we conduct ourselves in other matters even when we don't agree as clearly as I think we do on these two very important pieces of legislation.

You know, as I've been listening to the debate – another situation, that occurred in my constituency, that you may remember, very sadly and very tragically, unfortunately, played out in the summer. One of my constituents, Kelly Flock, a 68-year-old, went missing in Marda Loop, and his family and friends and the community undertook a very significant poster campaign and a lot of searching for Mr. Flock. It sounds like the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was connected to the family as well. He touched many, many, many lives. I just wonder. We'll never know if things may have been different. One wonders: if this bill were in place, if there were, in fact, a silver alert at the time, perhaps the word would have gotten out sooner. I know that the family and the community rallied very quickly and did a tremendous amount of work to search. It's just, I think, a good example of what benefit this bill may have.

Let's hope that these sorts of situations, which, unfortunately, do play out all too frequently in our province – whatever we can do to

help avoid such a situation again in the future, obviously, I think we need to get behind enthusiastically, and this bill will certainly do that.

Another note is that this will be the first bill of its type passed in our country, as I understand it. There is no Canada-wide system. I understand that in B.C. there is an informal program that aims to get the word out through social media. But where we have the tools at our disposal in the traditional media, I think, especially when talking about seniors who may not – not every senior I know is on Twitter. Some I know are on Twitter, and they're active social media users. But, certainly, using all tools at our disposal, especially and including mainstream media, I think, is a very important thing, and this bill, I think, will help us achieve that.

We know our population is aging in this province and in this country. You know, some statistics which are sobering: in addition to the fact that we know that for every person with dementia, 10 to 12 people in their lives, on average, are impacted – again, sometimes that's more – 1 in 10 Albertans aged 65-plus is dealing with some form of dementia. That number rises to half – fully half of people aged 90-plus deal with some form of dementia. Not all will be subject to wandering, but certainly many will. As I said in my earlier remarks, I have some personal experience in helping a neighbour through a situation like that and seeing the community rally around him. It was really heartening. But it was not, certainly, easy on his family.

That's not the situation that every person would find themselves in. Unfortunately, in our community, as communities get larger and we perhaps aren't as connected with our neighbours as we once were – and not everyone will wander only in a defined area. Perhaps they'll expand that out or get on the bus or even get in their car and, unfortunately, may find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings. Those around them may themselves not realize they're lost. Again, a silver alert system, I think, will really make a big, big difference in the lives of Albertans and bring some peace of mind to their families.

I understand that in our country over half a million Canadians are currently living with dementia. The scale of this challenge is quite immense, and unfortunately it's only going to get higher. Nearly a million Canadians will be afflicted with some form of dementia in the next 15 years, and more than 60 per cent of adults with Alzheimer's disease or dementia will wander, according to research out of the University of Alberta. So these are tremendous challenges that we face in our country, and I think we clearly have a duty and a responsibility to make sure that we have structures in place. This is one of them.

It is an opportunity. You know, one of the things I'm always proud of in our province is when we have an opportunity to lead the rest of the country. This is certainly one of those opportunities. I think the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon and his assistant Maureen should be commended for their work in bringing this forward. It really is wonderful to see the member's family here and members of the research community here as well to witness the passage of this bill. I would hope that this is something that the rest of the country would take up, perhaps a national system, or other provinces perhaps would see this as a beacon of hope, if you will. So it is really good to be part of something that is leading the country and solving a really important problem that we have in our communities.

4:40

I also hope this is an opportunity for us all to take this message back to our constituents. As we talk with our local media, as we talk with our constituents, as we do those newsletters that I hope we all do, it is an opportunity, I think, for us to talk about something that

we should all be proud of. We've made a big difference by passing Bill 209 earlier today. That is something we should be proud of, and as we move forward with Bill 210, I think this is also something we should be proud of. It is an opportunity to show our constituents, to show Albertans that, in fact, it's possible for us to work together, that when issues unite us, the issues that matter to Albertans, we can come together, united as an Assembly, and do very good work in passing legislation that will make a tremendous difference in the quality of life of Albertans.

Again, I hope that we take this as an opportunity to reflect on the tone of the House this afternoon, that, in fact, it is possible for us on both sides of the House, even though there are a great many things, I think, that we disagree on, even when we do disagree – it would be nice if the tone of the Assembly was a little more like this and a little less fractious. As far as I know, I don't believe there's been a single point of order this afternoon, and maybe the House leaders are welcoming that as well, that we don't need to worry about those sorts of things. So I do think it's possible, Madam Speaker, that we work more collegially and perhaps take this as an opportunity, even when we disagree, to adopt some of this tone.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'm without question rising to support Bill 210 at third reading, something that I think each of us in this Assembly ought to be very, very proud of, and encourage all the members to support Bill 210.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of Bill 210, Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017. Each and every time that I have the opportunity to visit one of the many long-term care or supportive living facilities in my community, I absolutely take advantage of that. I just have to speak about why that means so much to me.

As a teenager my mother worked in a supportive living facility, and on the weekends she would allow me to come and work with her. She would always steer me towards a resident that she felt needed a little bit of extra care, someone that maybe was a little lonely, someone that needed someone to talk to. One particular woman I remember very well. After breakfast she would go into her room, and she'd go into her closet and take out her suitcase, and she'd very carefully fill it up with all of her belongings and put on her coat and drag this suitcase to the front door, where she would sit and wait for her son to come and pick her up. My mother used to have me go and sit with her and strike up a conversation, and the next thing you know, we're going to the dining room and sharing a cup of tea together and taking her suitcase back down the hallway and unpacking it. The resident is happy. She's had someone to talk to, and then I could go on with the next resident.

I think that's what gave me my love of seniors, being able to volunteer in that setting. I absolutely looked forward to each and every weekend when I could volunteer and sit and have a conversation with the seniors. One of my favourite questions was to ask them: tell me what it was like in the olden days. Of course, they would absolutely love to sit and bend my ear for as long as I would sit with them. I think that's what began my career in working with seniors as an adult. In my community I have worked in long-term care and supportive living. I think I've worked in just about every facility in Red Deer. I absolutely loved my work. I loved the seniors.

Some of the facilities had bracelets that the residents would wear. It was maybe for residents that the facilitators, the operators, the nursing staff, or the families were fearful would wander off out of

the building. They would put a bracelet on them if the resident would wear one. Sometimes we would put it on their walker. When they would get close to the door, to an exit, an alarm, just a quiet alarm, would go off, and the door would lock. It wasn't always foolproof because sometimes when a visitor or a staff member was coming into a building, the resident would be leaving at the same time, and all of a sudden you have a resident that is outside and walking around, maybe looking for home, maybe looking for a relative, maybe just going for a walk.

There were a handful of times over the years where I found myself in the car driving around looking for a resident. Sometimes it was late at night, it was dark, the resident maybe didn't have a sweater on, or it was a little bit cooler in the evening. Of course, you can imagine how frightened the family members – they would have been notified – and the staff and the police were that were all out looking for a resident. I do have to say that each and every time we did find the resident and brought them home safely. I'm very, very happy about that. But I'm sure that there are stories that maybe didn't go quite so well.

I just have to say that I'm so happy with this act. I'm very proud that we're doing this here in our wonderful province of Alberta. I know that it would have been nice to have this act in place many, many years ago. I'm happy that, hopefully, we will all be in favour of this act and that, going forward, this will be an extra piece of protection for our seniors, who made this country, made this province the best province, the best country in the world to live, work, and raise a family in.

I want to thank the member for introducing this bill. I fully support it and hope that everyone in the House today supports it as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to support Bill 210, the Missing Persons (Silver Alert) Amendment Act, 2017. I would like to thank the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, who brought this bill forward.

I meet with a bunch of stakeholders in my riding that work with seniors. We try to meet on a monthly basis. I have a high population of seniors in Calgary-Bow, and the point of the meetings is so that we can work collaboratively to see what we can do to help improve the lives of seniors who live in the community. One of the things that was brought up was people who wander off from facilities and how we can combat that issue. I met with CARYA. It's a group in Calgary that works with seniors. She did bring up the fact that she had talked with the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, who was going to bring forward this private member's bill. I actually was very excited to hear that because it would improve the lives of so many seniors not only in my constituency but all over Alberta.

I remember that in 2015, during the campaign, I was driving down to Bowness. There's a seniors' facility there. I remember seeing a senior wandering around by herself. I thought to myself: well, that looks a little strange. So I decided to pull over and ask her if she was okay. Actually, she was a little confused, and she didn't know where she was. It was a good thing that I pulled over to talk to her. If I wasn't there, you know, who knows what would've happened to that woman?

4:50

I'm glad that this bill is now in third reading, so hopefully it's going to pass. I feel that there is going to be unanimous consent in the Legislature, which is really a refreshing thing to see.

I just wanted to say that I support this bill, and I want to thank the member for bringing this forward.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs? No?

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now we know what a deer in the headlights looks like, when you're asked to speak and you have no intention of speaking.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 210, a private member's bill. I have a short amount of time, I'm told.

Yeah. Silver alert. I'm just going to relay a short little personal message. My mother fell down a set of cement stairs, oh, goodness, three years ago, I think. Now, of course, she had lived in the same community for 60 or 70 years, probably 70, so she spent a lot of time walking to work and back. Everybody in town knew who she was, and she fell down this set of stairs. She phoned me the morning after she'd fallen. She'd actually gotten herself home, and she called and said: "There's something wrong. I don't know what it is, but there's blood everywhere, and I can't remember what happened." I went in to see what was going on, and she was bleeding from her nose, her lip, and bleeding from her ear. I thought: well, this is bad. We did get her to the hospital to find out how bad things were. At the end of the day, she had suffered a concussion, of course, and her cognitive ability started to slowly wither within the next year.

We worked on trying to find a place for her once we knew that it was going to become more serious than she could handle. She was living by herself. She had for several years, and there was no issue. She was able to clean her home and made sure that, you know, she could clean herself, have a bath and cook for herself, et cetera, et cetera. When we were trying to find a place to put her, it had to be a place with a dementia wing because not just anyone will take someone who's starting to have dementia. We do know that it isn't dementia because it hasn't gotten any worse.

At any rate, she continued to walk downtown to get the mail, continued to walk downtown to go to the stores, but as time progressed, she began to change her route a little bit. I mean, the woman had grown up – not grown up, but from the day she got married, when she was about 18, she certainly knew every inch of the town. The fact that she was changing her route either to or from where she was headed started to indicate some things.

I started to get some phone calls from folks in town that said, "Your mother is walking, like, down elevator row," or something to that effect. That was not something that she had historically done. She was probably looking for my wife. She knew that she worked down there somewhere, but she couldn't find her. She'd turn around and come back. People would call and say: "Your mother is standing in my back alley here, and she looks like she might be lost. I've never seen her in this alley before."

At any rate, there wasn't a silver alert. We're talking about a small town here, but I can understand. We did have a person that checked on her three times a day. I was trying to farm the farm, and my brother lives in British Columbia. We were doing the best we could until we could place her.

I've got one minute left. There was no seriousness with the Amber Alert. Everybody knows everybody in a small town. That's why I was getting phone calls from people that I've known all my life and that certainly knew her. They were advising me that she was doing strange things that she hadn't been doing in her life previously.

If something like this had happened in a city – and it's hard to place people. It's certainly hard to place seniors who have a little bit of dementia or the onset of it if they can't actually move in with you or another sibling or something. What we did in a small town was that we hired somebody to come morning, noon, and night to make sure she took her medication, make sure she was ... [interjection] Are we done? I'm afraid I have to quit. Sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I'll call the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to close debate.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to start by thanking everyone that provided information and the stakeholders that provided us with the experience and the knowledge to be able to craft this bill. I want to thank my legislative assistant. I'd like to just thank her for her insight and for all of the things that her mother helped us understand about this bill moving forward. In some ways I'd like to dedicate this to the memory of Anne McIntosh. All of these conversations solidified for us that this would be an important piece of legislation to bring forward in this House.

I believe that the Bowmont Seniors' Assistance Association said it pretty well, that

Bill 210 will be a vital link in the successful implementation of our community-developed version of Silver Alert programme. The ability of our front-line workers to release and access information about a missing, vulnerable senior in a timely manner will save lives.

I think that just about says it all, Madam Speaker. This is about saving lives. It is about dealing with the people that we care about when they reach their senior days.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 210 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just seeing the time, I would move to call it 5 o'clock and get to Motions Other than Government Motions. I need unanimous consent for that.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Concussion Awareness and Prevention

511. MLA McPherson moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize a day each year to promote the awareness and prevention of concussions.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It really is an honour to bring forward Motion 511. A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that affects brain function, and it can happen when there's a hit to the head or the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Everyone likely knows someone who has had a concussion, and any measures that can be taken to reduce the number of concussions that occur to Albertans and to improve the outcomes for those who do receive concussions are important in improving the quality of life of the people of our province.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

It's difficult to quantify the problem. While some statistics are available for sports-related injuries – on average 3 to 5 per cent of all sport and recreational injuries are head injuries – this number doesn't reflect the other ways concussions can occur, like workplace injuries or accidents in the home or head injuries from motor vehicle accidents. What we do know is that even a mild concussion can be very serious, and repeated concussions have been shown to result in chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a neurodegenerative disease associated with repeated brain injury.

We regularly see stories in the news of former professional athletes who've suffered the effects of CTE, grappling with depression, diminished cognitive capacity, and personality changes. CTE is only diagnosed on autopsy of the person suffering from it. The disease is often associated with hockey and football players, and both the NHL and NFL have developed protocols to begin to address the issue. Ty Pozzobon, the 2016 Professional Bull Riders Canada champion, took his own life in January of this year after suffering the effects of 13 concussions in the pursuit of his dream.

5:00

Education and awareness are vital to preventing devastating outcomes like this. Today in Alberta there is a gap in the information available to diagnose and treat concussion and in the instructions concussion patients receive, and there's a lack of awareness of concussion treatment protocols among people who are most likely to be on-site when someone gets a concussion.

Concussions aren't necessarily life threatening, but they are serious. Even a mild concussion can mean months of recovery and rehabilitation, and the symptoms of concussion are not easy to deal with: convulsions or seizures, inability to wake up, unremitting headache, weakness, numbness, decreased co-ordination, vomiting, nausea, confusion, slurred speech, loss of consciousness. Some of these symptoms can appear right away while others can show up days or months or even years after the traumatic event. Symptoms of concussion can be different in small children than they are in other people.

Rowan's law was passed in the Ontario Legislature in 2016. This private member's bill, introduced by MPP Lisa MacLeod, came about as the result of an inquest into the death of a 17-year-old young woman there, Rowan Stringer, who was a loving, nurturing person who was also an avid rugby player. Rowan died on Mother's Day, 2013, after suffering two concussions that week.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Recently backers of Rowan's law, including Eric Lindros, who quit the NHL because of concussion injuries, Montreal Canadiens' physician Dr. David Mulder, and Nepean-Carleton MPP Lisa MacLeod, who introduced the legislation in Ontario, released an open letter to federal, provincial, and territorial health ministers, calling for their jurisdictions to follow Ontario's example of enacting legislation aimed at preventing and identifying youth concussions, particularly in sport.

Establishing a provincial concussion prevention and awareness day that is observed every year is an important step in closing the gap between the information that is available to prevent and diagnose and treat concussion and getting that information to the people who can help to prevent concussions from happening and to the people who are on the scene when they do occur, like minor sports coaches and parents and teachers in our elementary, junior and senior high schools.

We all know someone who's had a concussion; some of us have likely had our bells rung ourselves. Concussion is far too common, and the effects are often devastating. By passing this motion, we

help people facing concussion in the future and, hopefully, prevent some of them from occurring at all.

The Deputy Speaker: Other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak on Motion 511. I'd like to add my voice to that of the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill in urging the government to recognize a day each year to promote awareness and prevention of concussions.

Concussions often occur after blows to the head, when the brain is jostled and hits the inside of the skull. While sometimes there are external signs of injury such as scrapes, cuts, or bruises, other symptoms are silent and unnoticeable or can be confused with less severe situations such as headaches, fatigue, or sleep disturbances. As you know, concussions are no laughing matter. Concussions are brain injuries, and in some cases they result in complications, either within the first 24 to 48 hours or even weeks later. This clearly shows the severity of concussions as they can manifest themselves over many days and weeks after the initial concerns have dissipated.

Fortunately, we're in a time that is seeing increased attention paid to concussions. There is much more information, research, and data available these days that help to guide the discussion around prevention and treatment of concussions. For example, we've seen professional sport leagues institute concussion protocols. The National Hockey League, of which I'm confident we at least have a handful of fans here, updated their protocols just over a year ago. After a hit is taken, if the club's staff is concerned, they have the ability to remove a player from the game to ensure that he is all right. There are additional staff available as well, from on-ice officials to in-arena league spotters and also central league spotters. This is meant to ensure multiple checks to try and keep players as safe and healthy as possible.

In 2009 the NFL, the National Football League, first instituted their concussion protocol, and they've made continual adjustments since then to try and ensure best possible practices. Again, a club has a responsibility to immediately remove from a field any player who is identified as possibly having received a concussion. If there is such a suspicion, the player is brought to the locker room for a full assessment.

The Canadian Football League, the CFL, also has a concussion protocol, that includes an injury spotter monitoring every game and the ability of a player to request a second opinion. There are also restrictions on padded practices in place and a commitment to further research and education.

It's quite something to see these professional sport organizations take such a hard stance on concussions. It's probably helped in large part by the sheer number of athletes who have suffered from concussions, players such as Keith Primeau, Paul Kariya, Steve Moore, Eric Lindros, Pat LaFontaine, to name a handful of former NHL players. Or you may be aware of some seriously concussed NFL players such as Aaron Hernandez, Frank Gifford, and Kevin Turner.

It's important to remember, however, that professional athletes are not the only ones that suffer from concussions. Seniors and children are also at risk. The University of Calgary's Cumming School of Medicine has reported that over 1,000 children and adolescents visit the Alberta Children's hospital emergency department every year with concussions. I don't need to remind you that that is one hospital. CBC has recently reported that elderly people are suffering concussions due to falls. As a person ages and becomes less stable, they are at greater risk of falling and therefore at greater risk of brain injuries, including concussions.

More and more people are becoming aware of the severity of concussions and the importance of not only early diagnosis but education and prevention. I spoke just a few minutes ago about the spotters in place within professional sport leagues whose sole job is to identify potential concussions. You and I don't have the advantage of having someone with acute knowledge of concussions watching our every move to ensure that we take the appropriate steps after we may have experienced a concussion-causing event. Public awareness in Alberta has been largely spearheaded by professional groups such as the Sports Medicine Council of Alberta and the Brain Care Centre. They've been doing much good work on this front. While the government site supports the brain injury initiative, it does not have the comprehensive awareness program in place that's specifically centred around concussions.

I must note that people do tend to think that concussions are solely due to major sports injuries and whatnot, but I'd like to emphasize to people that in this winter weather, though, with the icy roads and icy sidewalks, some of the major head injuries can occur just by slippage and falling the height of your person. That five-foot drop is enough to severely damage your head, and people have died as a result of that, from internal bleeding and whatnot.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I think that it's important that our government strongly consider taking further steps to promote awareness and education about concussions. I therefore strongly encourage all of my colleagues in the Assembly to support this motion.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's really a pleasure today to rise in support of Motion 511. About two years ago I got woken up in the middle of the night by my son, who was living in Egypt at the time, because he had been hit once again with a basketball. He was a teacher at the time. While we had thought that the damage caused by previous concussions had gone away and that he was going to be okay, the time that he was hit by a basketball just brought all the symptoms back again. There followed for me as a parent and for him 10 months of really, really difficult time. I thought that I might have to go to Egypt to take him back home because the symptoms were so extreme. He had received one too many concussions. The symptoms did not go away. He barely could teach his last term at school, and when he came back to Canada, he couldn't function. He basically needed to spend time in a darkened room, he wasn't able very often to be fully coherent, and he had excruciating headaches. It was only with six months of rest and some treatment in a specialized institute in Victoria that he found some balance in his life.

I know what happens to people who have concussions, and I know the danger that happens when somebody has had a number of concussions. In his case, it was because he was involved in high-risk sports. He was involved in rugby, where he never, never, never decided to play it safe but always was right there in the tackle, and he was a goalie in hockey. His concussions were because he was involved in those sports.

5:10

I am thankful that the motion calls for the annual recognition of concussion awareness and provides an opportunity for the public to become more aware of concussions and the fact that concussions do not result in symptoms right in the time after they happen but also can last a very, very long time in the person's life. I know that for my son, even though he seems okay now, the fact that he had so many concussions is going to have an impact on his life throughout

his career. I'm thankful that now he takes a lot more precautions when he's coaching sports and basketball. I am also hoping that he plays hockey a lot safer than he used to.

I like the idea of proposing a recognition day because that recognition day would highlight all of the efforts that are going on in the province at this time around concussions. I understand that there are efforts under way at the moment to develop a pan-Canadian approach for concussions, and this work is being led by a federal-provincial-territorial working group. Alberta is represented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism under the Member for Calgary-Cross.

I also know that there are injury prevention programs at Alberta Health Services and that the Injury Prevention Centre is working to reduce the incidence of injuries, including concussions. I'm also very well aware that in a lot of the sports teams, especially hockey, rugby, and those sports that are more likely to result in concussions, there's a lot of prevention that has been happening and the coaches, the players, the parents are all aware of the danger of concussions. As I've seen very often, because we're taking it seriously, if a child does fall on the ice, for example, there is a system to ensure that the child is followed up with by a doctor. Very often they end up in an emergency just to make sure that it is not a concussion or that if it is a concussion, the parents are fully aware of what to do, which includes watching the kid for the next 24 hours and making sure that they're not left alone when they're sleeping.

I would like to suggest to the member, if the member is open to that, that the recognition day could be declared in June because this is also Brain Injury Awareness Month. This would strengthen the linkage between concussion and the work already going on in terms of brain injury awareness, so there could be a synergy of activities happening at the same time.

I also appreciate the fact that concussions are not just as a result of playing sports, as in the case of my son, but, also, that it happens to a lot of the people involved in our heavy industries and seniors. My mother was hit by a car. She fell backward, and she had a concussion. In her case the concussion resulted in the loss of the senses of smell and taste. While she did recover, her senses of smell and taste never did. I appreciate the discussion this afternoon, that we are not just concentrating on concussions that are caused by active participation in sports but that we recognize seniors who fall on the ice, as the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo mentioned, and that we're also recognizing that a lot of our labour force may be prone to getting concussions and that, just like young people, they may have symptoms due to concussion for the rest of their lives.

Passing this motion that was proposed would make Alberta a leader in concussion awareness. For that as a mother and as a daughter I am very, very grateful, that our province would really take concussions seriously and that we would understand that concussion and the resulting brain injury are something that lasts for a person's lifetime, so it's a very important thing to be aware of. No other provinces so far have declared a day to recognize concussions, so if this motion passes, we will make Alberta the first province to do so. I really do believe that this motion is an important step in reducing the occurrence of concussions. I would like to suggest that, as is already happening, all parents make sure that for the activities that their kids are involved in, there is very strong concussion prevention awareness, either through the staff or coaches having received training or through the young people themselves understanding the consequences of getting a concussion and how you prevent getting a concussion when you're active in sports.

I just wanted to end by suggesting to my colleagues in this House that we need to support this motion and that we need to support all

efforts to prevent concussion. We also need to support the recognition that concussions last for a person's lifetime and that sometimes a person's behaviour may be the result of a concussion.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a real honour to rise to speak in favour of this motion brought forward by my hon. colleague the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. It's been interesting listening to the debate, and I'm pleased to hear that it sounds like we're all in agreement in this Chamber that this is a very important motion and that the issue of concussions should be taken very seriously.

We live in a time of increased awareness of concussions. It is interesting to note that professional sports leagues like the NHL and the NFL and, of course, the CFL as well as Major League Baseball have taken steps. I think any credible sports organization, professional or amateur, is now realizing the potentially devastating and negative consequences of concussion. But even though the awareness has increased, I think that it's very important that we move forward with supporting a specific day to recognize. I think that although there has been a lot of great work done, even more work is needed.

I note that my daughter's figure skating club this year has a poster on the wall and specific leaflets about concussion. They've adopted a specific concussion protocol, and it gives me great comfort as a parent to know that they've taken this issue seriously. But even more awareness is needed, and more awareness will help. As many members have noted already – but I think it's worth repeating – it is not just an issue that affects pro athletes. It's not even an issue that affects just athletes. There are any number of reasons why people may find a concussion befalling them.

I think of a constituent of mine, in fact, someone who worked tirelessly on my campaign. He missed the bottom step in his house and fell down, hit his head, and for the last two years has just not been right. He hasn't been able to work. It's been a really terrible, terrible journey for them. Recognizing that concussion has a tremendous impact on our community, the impact on his quality of life has been dramatic and, of course, the impact on our economy. He's been unable to work for that two-year period of time. It is not just athletes, and so much more work is needed in terms of research. It's heartening to know that a lot of research is under way, but even more needs to be done. Of course, the best form of cure for a concussion is prevention in the first place, so more research and work going on into helmets in professional sport and an overall culture of safety in the workplace as well are going to help.

5:20

I'm pleased to hear the Member for Sherwood Park rise to support this motion. I would encourage all members of the government side, all members of the opposition side to support this motion. I was also pleased to hear the Member for Sherwood Park propose a potential date, sometime in June. While a private member's motion, of course, can't compel the government to actually take action, merely urge the government to do so, I would hope the government does take the advice of this Assembly seriously and if, in fact, we do pass this motion today, finds a date that we can promote awareness and prevention of concussions. I think that finding a date in June, Brain Injury Awareness Month, would be very appropriate. Given that it is now December, I would hope that perhaps the government would find a date to mark this important promotion of awareness and prevention of concussions as soon as June of next year.

I would encourage all my hon. colleagues to vote in favour of this motion, and I thank once again my colleague for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for bringing forward this motion. Concussion prevention and treatment is an issue of concern for many Albertans, especially given the potential for lasting physical, emotional, and cognitive effects. This is something that we've heard about a fair deal in my riding as well. We have a constituent who has visited us a few times. His son had a brain injury a couple of years ago, and it has had a really tremendous effect on the son as well as on his parents and on their family and their quality of life. It's completely changed this young man's personality as well as his future, the fact that he suffered this concussion.

As members may be aware, young people are at particular risk for concussion-related injuries, and youth aged 10 to 19, both boys and girls, have the highest rates of emergency department visits due to concussion. Approximately 10 to 15 per cent of individuals with concussions require access to specialist rehabilitation services, mental health care, and physician specialists. We know that many of these injuries can be prevented in simple ways, by learning to protect yourself and others and by taking precautions to create safer environments. People living with brain injury are more vulnerable to mental health disorders, including anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and depression.

This summer I had the opportunity to tour some of the incredible facilities devoted to brain injury and rehabilitation across Alberta. I also had the chance to meet with people living with brain injuries, families, and volunteer supporters, who are doing so very much to support people in their communities.

One that I would particularly like to highlight is the Central Alberta Brain Injury Society, located in Red Deer, where I had the opportunity to sit not just with members but also the volunteers and some of the individuals who have suffered from a brain injury and to speak with them at length about the experiences that they and some of the membership have had. I had the opportunity to meet with patients, family, and caregivers and hear about some of the programs offered such as family and peer support groups as well as caregiver supports.

I also had the opportunity to meet with the Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society in Calgary and tour the brain injury program at Foothills hospital. Patients of the brain injury program have access to a team of mental health professionals, who work to address their mental health concerns and provide support and guidance around available resources within the community. I also had the opportunity to meet with the Banff sports medicine foundation along with the Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Other health supports that are offered in our province include the Injury Prevention Centre, which provides safety guidelines for activities in school and for fall prevention amongst seniors as well as the complex concussion clinic at the Glen Sather Sports Medicine Clinic, which offers long-term supports for patients with prolonged concussion symptoms from a multidisciplinary health care team.

I'm extremely proud of the work that my ministry is doing along with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Community and Social Services to advance research and care for Albertans with brain injuries, including concussions. The Alberta brain injury initiative provides province-wide access to supports for adults with acquired brain injury to live, work, and participate in

their communities. It consists of a network of 14 agencies across Alberta to assist survivors and caregivers in accessing supports from various programs and community resources.

There's also Campus Alberta Neuroscience, which is a network that brings together Alberta's neuroscience research community with clinicians, patient groups, funders, and policy-makers to facilitate strategic collaborations and alignment in education, research, and translation of health solutions. I was very pleased to join this group at the kickoff of their annual conference this fall.

It is clear that this is an issue that our government takes seriously and one that Albertans will continue to emphasize with me. The more work we can do to bring awareness to the issue of concussion safety, the better. For these reasons, I am pleased to support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to take two or three minutes and thank my colleagues that have spoken so far. I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for bringing this motion forward: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize a day each year to promote the awareness and prevention of concussions." I one hundred per cent, wholeheartedly agree with everything I've heard said about protecting our youth, protecting our athletes, protecting seniors and people that had a fall, and I want to add one more element that I'm aware of.

I'm grateful in this position to always have the opportunity to meet people and learn. About 25 miles from Medicine Hat we have the Suffield military base, and at the Suffield military base we have the defence research establishment Suffield. About five years ago I had the opportunity to be given a tour and a chance to see a lot of the research that they were working on. Something that I had absolutely never thought of, something that I was absolutely, completely unaware of is that one of the big things that our soldiers face when they're fighting is concussions from the shock waves, concussions from bombs and stuff, artillery that doesn't necessarily hit them but land nearby and, of course, has waves and shocks and serious, serious ramifications for our men and women in uniform.

My goodness, we owe so much to them. We can't thank them enough for what they do for us to protect our ability to live free lives and to stand in here and have the opportunity to talk about this. [some applause] Thank you.

So, hey, in some small way, if a day like this can help a military person or help somebody understand what a military person may be going through, I would say that it would be very, very rewarding and a very, very good step. Because of that and all the other reasons mentioned, I will be supporting this, and I thank my colleague for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to speak briefly on this just because, again, it's another motion today that I think is touching us all personally in many, many ways. I think all of us probably know members of our community and constituents that have suffered concussions, some of them silently and some of them having been more aware. I think this is an opportunity to increase that awareness so that when people have concussions or potential concussions, there's a greater awareness of those around them. Sometimes they're in a bit of a daze and not able to think clearly because of that injury.

I have a dear friend whose mother had a fall on a skating rink about 20 years ago, and she still suffers to this day. She's in her late 70s and still has many challenges that she faces both mentally and physically in terms of her ongoing rehabilitation, now even 20 years later, in terms of her ability to speak and reason and certain things like that. That's been a real impact on her life. Her husband, who was very helpful, passed away a number of years ago. Now she's living independently.

Another friend of mine's son was riding in a quad, and it came to an abrupt halt. He was thrown out of the vehicle, actually landed on his feet, fell back, and hit his head. He suffered a concussion and, in fact, maybe a little bit beyond that, a brain injury that took him a couple of years to recover from.

Just last week I had a young individual, a young constituent of mine, Kinga, who was introduced here in the House as well, who suffered a sports injury. She's now 18 years old and was diagnosed with a sports injury that she didn't even really know that she had specifically when she was 15, wasn't properly diagnosed or treated. She struggled, as she shared with me, with this invisible illness.

Few people understand the effects of concussions and don't take them seriously. Of course, the symptoms are imperceptible other than that somebody is having challenges sometimes with their schooling or with their lives or with work or other things like that. Sometimes those symptoms can be chalked up to other reasons, and in fact their lives can be very seriously affected in more ways from that.

5:30

She shared with me that there are 10,000 new concussions in Alberta alone each year, the leading cause of death and disability for those under the age of 44, so a huge issue for youth. She also said that some of the most vulnerable are girls between the ages of 14 and 17, for whatever reason. She indicated that there's a prolonged recovery period that she's been suffering through as well. Of course, there are sports injuries, vehicle accidents. Sometimes, again, what may not appear to be a serious accident could result in a concussion.

You know, in fact, even one of our caucus staff, who is on medical leave, had an injury also. Again, a very, very odd situation. She banged her head getting into a vehicle, a hard hit, and has suffered now for a number of months with light sensitivity and inability to concentrate. Of course, for those of us that work on computer screens, all too often that's not an easy thing to recover from. We certainly have a great deal of compassion for those situations where someone wants to be fully productive and work and get on with their lives, but through those injuries and the prolonged recovery it can be a problem.

Madam Speaker, this is another great initiative today. I echo the sentiments of the Member for Calgary-Elbow that we've addressed some really positive and, I think, some uplifting issues here today. I'm quite happy to support this motion so that we can raise awareness for all individuals. It obviously happens from a very young age right through to seniors, and this can be very debilitating. If we can raise awareness and, as importantly, raise identification of when those injuries occur and how we can address those as quickly as possible, I think that's a very positive thing.

I will be supporting this motion, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, the hon. mover of the motion, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to take a few minutes to thank some people this afternoon. I'd like to start by thanking everyone who took the opportunity to speak in favour of the motion this afternoon: the members for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, Sherwood Park, and everyone else that . . .

Mr. Clark: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms McPherson: Yes, the Associate Minister of Health.

There was Cypress-Medicine Hat and Calgary-Fish Creek. I really appreciate it. I can tell that concussion really resonates with a lot of people. It's affected a number of people.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank some of the people that I consulted with in coming up with the motion. The first one is Dr. Mylène Hopf from Calgary. It was a conversation with her talking about concussions, patients that she saw in her own practice, and a lack of consistent information about concussion, both prevention and treatment. What she said to me was that a number of her patients didn't understand the instructions that were given to them, which makes sense because one of the symptoms of concussion can be confusion. So it makes a lot of sense that she would end up seeing people who were struggling with those symptoms.

She also related to me that she'd love to see some sort of way to disseminate information across the province, well, actually, with a few different groups, medical personnel and front-line medical workers, to have consistent information to share with patients, to have consistent education for people who are going to be dealing with situations where concussions might occur – minor sports is one area; teachers, coaches, parents are going to be attending those kinds of events – to have consistent information in the form of a brochure or an education program that would help people in those circumstances know what to do and also consistent information for patients so that when they have spoken to medical personnel, they're able to refer back to the information that they've received because it's very difficult for them to retain the information.

I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of the MPP for Nepean-Carleton in Ontario for her private member's bill Rowan's law. That established the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee to review jury recommendations made as a result of a coroner's inquest into the death of 17-year-old Rowan Stringer. The act required the committee to provide advice to the government with respect to head injury prevention and treatment. The report was tabled earlier this fall, and it contains 21 recommendations to address concussions.

Also, the Alberta Concussion Alliance and the Sport Medicine Council of Alberta have come together to provide direction about the prevention of and safe recovery from sport- and recreation-related concussions.

I also want to thank the numerous individuals I spoke to about their concussion experiences, how it affected their lives and continues to affect their lives, how long it took and is taking them to recover, and especially to Barb Currie from the Alberta Party caucus for generously sharing her family's experiences with concussion.

What this motion can do is create more awareness, prompt more education, hopefully spur more research about concussions, and ideally prevent some concussions and the associated suffering from occurring. I think it's an important motion, and I encourage everyone to support it.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 511 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think we will move on to private member's Motion 512 next week if we're here, so I would move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn till 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:37 p.m.]

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