

**Excerpts from Alberta Hansard
Week ending October 31, 2019**

Newest to Oldest

October 30, 2019 Afternoon
Pg. 2080 full Transcript [HERE](#)

Indigenous Housing Capital Program

Ms Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, after a significant and extensive consultation our government introduced the indigenous housing capital program, which provided \$120 million in funding to increase the supply of affordable housing to Alberta's indigenous communities. Sadly, this program doesn't appear anywhere in the budget and has seemingly been cancelled. Can the Minister of Seniors and Housing explain why her government will give corporations \$4.7 billion but won't give a single dollar to indigenous housing?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing is rising to answer.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indigenous people in Alberta often face an additional challenge finding welcoming, appropriate, affordable housing. We will partner with indigenous people and communities to build more affordable housing that meets their unique needs. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, given that our government consulted extensively to create that program that would work best with indigenous communities and given that when I asked the minister yesterday in estimates about the program's cancellation, she could only point to \$35 million in funding for general affordable housing, to the minister: is it that you don't understand the serious housing needs of the indigenous communities, or is it simply that you don't care about these communities, only about corporate profits?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations has risen.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A key part of our government's mandate includes lifting Alberta's population out of poverty, getting people back to work, and improving the lives of all Albertans. Our government recognizes the continuing need for adequate housing both on- and off-reserve for indigenous Albertans, and we're

committed to ensuring vulnerable Albertans have access to safe, suitable, and affordable housing options.

Ms Sigurdson: This is a program from Seniors and Housing. Given that the minister can't adequately explain why she removed the indigenous housing program from the budget and given that the minister claimed that it was being reviewed for "alignment with our platform commitments" but that does nothing to support indigenous communities, can the Minister of Seniors and Housing please cut the nonsense and commit to this House right now to restoring the indigenous housing program?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the member's question. It's a very important question. If you look in the financial statements in the estimates, it's important to show that we spend \$30 million in the capital grant for the next three years. The previous NDP government failed indigenous people in Alberta needing affordable housing. Under the indigenous housing capital program not one new unit of housing was built under the NDP. Our government is committed to being a true partner with Alberta's indigenous people.

October 29, 2019 evening session
Pg. 2068 Full Transcript [HERE](#)

Discussion of Bill 21-Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019

Member Irwin:

Right. Exactly. That's the fear and smear sort of, you know, technique that they would say of us.

You know, prior to seeing this in writing, I would have said, "You know what; you're probably right," because truly it's a mere pittance in budgets that are billions of dollars. Yet here we are. It's happening. The indexing of AISH is being postponed. Now, I was so proud when our government indexed AISH. I know my colleague from Calgary-McCall did a lot of great work. I actually had the honour of being able to work a little bit on that and connect with a lot of stakeholders who were so happy I was at that announcement. It was at Boyle Street Plaza in my riding. Right by Boyle Street Plaza there are actually a number of affordable housing complexes, and I've had the pleasure of visiting and knocking on doors there. Many of those folks are dependent on AISH.

When this government and when this Premier say things like, "You know, it's not onerous; it's small; it's a drop in the bucket," I can tell you – and I'll be the first to

admit it; I don't know how much I should say – that we definitely should have done more. We know that. We started to do good work to support low-income Albertans, and I will say, because I don't mind being fully transparent, that I think there was more that needed to be done, absolutely. But for the members opposite to say, "You waited this long, and it's just going to be a delay, and it's not going to be onerous," it's absolutely false. A few dollars a month makes a significant impact for folks who are struggling.

In fact, I had someone message me just yesterday, someone who is on AISH, someone who is severely disabled, and she's worried. She said: "I'm already struggling day in, day out. I'm not someone who wastes money." She said that she manages her budget as closely as she can, and she's worried. I'm sure many of my colleagues in this House have heard similar stories. I know some of the ministers have the habit of saying to us to come visit their ridings and hear from people in their ridings. Well, you know what? I would like to extend that offer to the Finance minister. I could probably set him up with 20, 30, 50 meetings with folks who are going to be severely impacted by the choices that this government is making, and they'd love to be able to talk to him about that face to face. Please, the offer is out there, Minister. Consider taking it up.

9:40

Now, with this omnibus bill, in addition to AISH, I mentioned that affordable housing is impacted, because the indexing of benefits also impacts income support, the seniors' lodge program. I, too, have the benefit of having a number of seniors' lodges in my riding, many of which are for seniors on fixed incomes. Now, let's look at some of the attacks. This is another attack on seniors. We've seen that their drug plans for dependants have been stripped back. Again, I can point to a whole heck of a lot of seniors in my own riding who would say that the cuts to the seniors' lodge program are going to impact them quite severely.